

Dwijendralal Ray

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE
Dwijendralal Ray

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*Dedicated to
the memory of my departed wife Belarani*

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Life of a patriot, poet and playwright

Early youth at Krishnagar

Dwijendralal Ray was born in an illustrious family at Krishnagar in the district of Nadia. Krishnagar was at one time the capital of the kingdom of Navadwipa and is still famous as a centre of learning and culture. Dwijendralal's father Kartikeyachandra Ray (1820-85) was the Dewan (Chief Officer) of the Krishnagar palace. He was a well-known literary figure, proficient in classical music, a scholar of no mean reputation and had a very endearing personality. Dwijendralal imbibed the literary and musical qualities from his father. His mother descended from the family of the great Vaishnava savant Adwaita Acharya of Santipur. The pious lady, an epitome of all virtues and sweet tenderness influenced deeply the character of his son. The youngest of the seven sons of Kartikeyachandra, Dwijendralal had a sister younger than him.

Even as a child Dwijendralal would like to enjoy nature in its plenty around him. He was fond of expressing his feelings in impromptu lines of poetry. He was a bit moody and introvert in nature and liked to be absorbed in his thoughts all alone. But he could speak very fluently for a long time. He passed the Entrance examination in 1878 from the Krishnagar Collegiate School showing special proficiency in English. In 1880 he passed the F.A. exam. From Krishnagar he went to study in B.A. class in Hooghly College and lastly he got himself admitted into Presidency College to study in the M.A. class there. He obtained his M.A. degree in 1884. Due to his indifferent health he could not do as well as was expected of him. Still his results all along were impressive. He got scholarship in Entrance and F.A. exam. and stood second in M.A. exam.

In 1882 his first collection of poems entitled *Āryagāthā*, Part I was published. It is a selection of songs written between twelve years and seventeen years of age. The songs were hailed by the leading papers of the time.

For study in England

In 1884 Dwijendralal was awarded a state scholarship for study of agriculture. Taking leave of his tearful mother and sorrowful father he sailed for England. His description of the sea-voyage and his keen observations on the manners, customs, food-habits and dresses of the British people were serially published in a weekly named 'Pataka', edited and published by his brothers. The writings were titled 'Bilater Patra' (Letters from England) in which his staunch patriotism, high sense of self-respect and spirited nature were manifested everywhere.

When in England Dwijendralal was bereaved to receive the news of the death of his affectionate father and mother in 1885. Kartikeyachandra died first and his devoted wife followed him a few months later. His loving father could restrain his affection within himself, but his mother was carried away by her unfathomable affection for her dearest son. In a poem entitled 'The stream' published in 'The Lyrics of Ind' Dwijendralal has expressed his feelings for his mother in this way—

Some say, I'm cruel to have left
My mother lone my loss to mourn;
But know they not how sore my heart
For her doth oft in silence burn.

While in England Dwijendralal used to write lyrical poems in English which were collected and published in a book entitled 'The Lyrics of Ind' (1886). In the Preface the author says, 'My principal object in the composition of following verses has been to harmonise English and Indian poetries as they ought to be. The poems are dedicated to the renowned English poet of that time Edwin Arnold. Dwijendralal was an M.A. in English and his mastery over the English language was beyond any doubt. Moreover as the poet himself has admitted he was at that time lured by the charms of the English romantic poetry, particularly he was immersed in the poetry of Shelley, the poems— 'Hymn to the spirit of love', 'Love's philosophy' and 'The stream' etc. bear testimony to Shelley's influence on him. Far away from his native land the poet like his predecessor Michael Madhusudan Dutta pays homage to his country in glowing terms — 'O dear Bharat, my beautiful maiden, O sweet Ind, once the queen of the world'.

After passing the examination from the Cirencester College Dwijendralal was enrolled as a member of the Royal Agricultural College (M.R.A.C.) and the Royal Agricultural Society (M.R.S.A.E.). He was awarded the Diploma in F.R.A.S. In 1886 he returned to India.

Marriage and government service

On his return from England Dwijendralal met the Governor of Bengal in connection with his appointment. He was appointed to the post of Deputy Magistrate, in 1886. He had to work in the Departments of Survey and Settlement, Excise, Land Records and Agriculture, Administration and Judiciary. In connection with his official works he had to travel extensively to different parts of Bengal and also to many places in Bihar and Madhyapradesh. But he could not make any use of his expertise in Agriculture in any of his office programmes.

Meanwhile Dwijendralal's marriage with Surabala Devi, daughter of Pratapchandra Majumder was celebrated according to strict Hindu rites. Surabala was a girl of eleven years only, and Dwijendralal liked her at first sight. But he refused to accept any dowry in cash or kind.

It may be mentioned here that when Dwijendralal returned home he was not greeted with welcome by all sections of the society. The conservative sections of the society insisted that he was required to atone for the violation of Hindu customary rule not to cross the seas. Dwijendralal was a very independent-spirited defiant young man and he refused to yield to the pressure of the social bigots and so he was condemned as an outcast. Dwijendralal's retribution against the society was a stinging satirical sketch named 'Ekghare' (outcast) in which he hurled most pungent attacks against social bigotry and conservatism.

Dwijendralal's experience in Govt. service was not all too happy. On many occasions he had sharp differences with his superior officers. He was always led by reason and pertinent rules and stuck to his point firmly. Ultimately his stand was vindicated but he began to incur the displeasure of his superior. In 1894 he was appointed the First Inspector of the Excise Department. In 1898 he was appointed the Assistant Director, Land Records and Agriculture

Departments, in 1900 he became the Assistant to the Commissioner, Excise Department. He was again appointed Inspector, Excise Department.

Literary Activities

Dwijendralal was preparing himself to get settled in his happy family life and he was too busy with his official duties and so he could not so long start his literary activities in right earnest. As a matter of fact his second Bengali publication was published after a gap of ten years from *Āryagāthā*, Part I. The second publication named *Āryagāthā*, Part II was out at a time when he enjoyed the happiest moments of his life in the company of his loving and devoted wife. The poems of *Āryagāthā* II are pure songs divided into two parts. The first part contains the original songs of the poet and in the second part the translations of the songs of foreign poets are collected.

Dwijendralal's mirthful attitude to life was reflected in the ever popular comic songs composed in the last five or six years of the last century. Mainly based on these songs his pungent and at the same time extremely hilarious farces appeared one after another – 1. 'Kalki Avatār', 1895 (The incarnation of Kalki), *Biraha*, 1897 (Separation), *Tryahasparśa*, 1900 (The juncture of three days), 'Prāyaschittā', 1901 (Atonement). *Āshāde*, 1898 (In the month of *Āshār*) is a collection of long satirical poems written at that time. The lyrical poems written at that time were collected and published in 1902 in a volume entitled 'Mandra' (High sound).

Dwijendralal started his literary career as poet-composer of song and in the second phase making use of his comic songs he wrote hilarious farces and in the third phase he took to writing dramas in verse. The three verse-dramas that were written in quick succession were *Pāṣāṇī* (1900), *Sītā* (first published in a journal in 1902), *Tārābāī* (1903). *Pāṣāṇī* (Stony) is based on the story of Ahalyā turned into stone by the curse of her husband, the sage Gautama for her sinful act with Indra, the king of heaven. *Sītā* mainly based on Bhababhuti's 'Uttara Rāma Charita' has been drawn by the dramatist with great reverence showing her an ideal character representing all that is best in a woman. *Tārābāī* is a historical drama written in blank verse, the story taken from Tod's Rajasthan. This

drama heralded his entry into the field of serious historical drama.

Dwijendralal stayed in Calcutta without any break from 1898-1905. In 1903 he was mentally upset at the sudden and untimely death of his dear wife. Gone were the days of laughter and light merriment. Life was now lonely, sad and sombre. The glories of past history, the valiant struggle and sacrifice for freedom, the eternal conflict between good and evil, the tragedy of the mighty people inspired his imagination and creative power and he began writing historical plays, considered to be among the best in Bengali literature. The epoch-making dramas are— *Rānā Pratāpsingha* (1905), *Nurjāhān* (1906), *Mevārpatan* (1908), *Sājāhan* (1908), *Chandragupta* (1909). Dwijendralal wrote two social plays— *Banganārī* (Woman of Bengal – 1910) and *Parapāre* (At the next world – 1911). His third mythological play *Bhīṣma* was published long after his first two plays in 1912. In 1908 he composed an opera named *Shorāb-Rustum* following the epic tragedy of *Shāh-Nāma*. *Punarjanma* (Re-birth-1910) is perhaps his best-constructed farce, but *Ānandabidāy*, a burlesque smacks of bad taste, unbecoming of him. *Sinhal-Vijay* (Conquest of Sinhal-1913) was published posthumously after the death of the author.

Events of his personal life

Dwijendralal spent sixteen years of conjugal life in perfect happiness. His wife *Surabālā Devi* gave birth to five children, three of whom died very young. Their only son *Dilipkumar* (nicknamed *Mantu* by his affectionate parents) was famous in later years as a noted musician, writer and devotee of *Shri Aurovindo Ashram*. Their daughter *Maya Devi* was born in 1898. But their conjugal happiness was short-lived. In 1903 *Surabala* left for her heavenly abode. The end was so sudden that Dwijendralal who was away from home for some days could not see her alive at the last moment.

Surabala was an ideal house-wife keeping perfect order in household affairs and looking after every body with tender care. Everything was in disarray after her death. He was advised by many to re-marry, but he sternly refused. After losing his wife he tried to fill up the void in his life by all absorbing love for son and daughter to whom he now became both father and mother. After the death

of his wife he built a house of his own in North Calcutta and named it Suradhām.

Dwijendralal was a warm-hearted, sociable personality and he had a large circle of friends with whom he liked to enjoy literary discussion, vivacious talks and songs. To foster unity and amity among the writers a cultural society named 'Purnima Milan' was formed. The monthly sitting of the society was held at one member's house each month who had to bear all the expenses. Elaborate arrangements were made for music, recitation, comic songs, comic sketch, bioscope etc.

Two years after the death of his wife Dwijendralal was transferred to Khulna in 1905. On the eve of his departure he was felicitated by his friends in a function in which glowing tributes were paid to his poetry. While he was moving from one place to another such as Murshidabad, Kandi, Gaya, Jahanabad in connection with his official work continuously for three years he wrote his famous historical plays e.g. 'Durgādās', 'Nurjāhān', 'Mevārpatan', 'Sājāhān' etc. He was also composing his inspiring patriotic songs at that time. He was felicitated on another occasion on the eve of his transfer to Bankura. Mahendra Kumar Mitra, proprietor of Minerva theatre and a close friend of Dwijendralal organised this function. He was offered felicitations at many other places. His patriotic songs and most inspiring plays brought about an unprecedented awakening everywhere in Bengal and his was a household name in all places far and near.

In 1908 he took long leave to stay in Calcutta. Next year he was appointed Deputy Magistrate of 24 Parganas. After staying four years in Calcutta he was transferred to Bankura and after three months he was again transferred to Monghyr. While on his way to Monghyr he was taken seriously ill in Calcutta. He was suffering from high blood pressure and hypertension. He was advised restricted food and forbidden to sing. But he did not strictly adhere to the advice and warning of the doctor. Due to his failing health he took voluntary retirement from service, in 1913.

Dwijendralal lived only for two months after retirement from service. At that time Gurudas Chattopadhyay and Sons brought out a journal of high standard named 'Bhāratbarṣa' of which Dwijendralal was the Editor and Amulyacharan Vidyabhushan was

the Assistant Editor. But his end came so suddenly. On May 17, 1913 Dwijendralal while engaged in some literary writing had a sudden attack of epilepsy. He muttered something and only once called his son Mantu in a gasping voice. Then he lost all consciousness. All medical treatment was of no avail. Dwijendralal was no more.

The dead body was decorated with flowers and carried in a procession to the Nimtala burning ghat where his mortal remains were consigned to flames. After his passing away the whole of Bengal seemed to mourn his loss. Condolence meetings were held at Bangiya Sahitya Parisad, Rammohan Library, Town Hall and other places and the leading public figures paid respectful homage to the memory of Dwijendralal.



Colorful personality – robust patriotism – broad humanism

Dwijendralal's life-span was short— only fifty years. His life was short but it was resplendent with all-round success and blazing glory. His many-splendoured colorful personality left an indelible impression upon the mind of everybody who came in contact with him. He was born with many natural gifts which he made the best use for his success. He was fair complexioned, with a stately figure, sharp facial features and sonorous voice. His bald head with tufts of dishevelled hair lent a care-free dignity to his appearance. When he sat among his friends or when he was seated at the rehearsal-room of a theatre among the actors and actresses he was the central figure commanding respect from one and all.

In his boyhood Dwijendralal was a bit introvert, talking very little and liked to be left alone, but in his youth he loved to spend a lot of his time in the company of his friends with an open mind and warm heart. His doors were always open and his hospitality knew no bounds. He could regale the audience by singing songs one after another with his grave, sonorous voice. He could compose any number of songs with greatest ease for any occasion from the highly inspiring patriotic songs and humorous songs arousing peals of laughter. The composer and singer combined in him, a perfect combination indeed. At that time his humorous songs were so popular that whenever he went he was pestered with pressing demand to sing humorous songs. He would also train the actresses of the public stage to sing the songs while acting in his plays.

Dwijendralal was also adept in histrionic art. Occasionally he appeared on the stage to act in some roles of his plays. His acting in the role of Valmiki in *Sitā* and Śaktasingh in 'Rana Pratapsingh' was praised by the audience. His role as instructor of acting was, however, more important. He would train the actors and actresses of the public stage for hours together, and he would not stop until they could act as perfectly as he wanted.

Dwijendralal was a brilliant luminary in the intellectual world.

A fine product of the University upto the highest level, he always engaged himself in the pursuit of higher learning. A student of English literature, while in England, he got absorbed in the study of English literature particularly English poetry and English drama. He was so much imbued with the spirit of English poetry that he was prompted to write poems collected in 'Lyrics of Ind' under the influence of romantic English poetry. His intensive study of Shakespeare and his visit to the public theatres in London, drew him to the world of drama where he reigned supreme during and after his life-time. His acquaintance with the most modern drama movement in Europe helped him to apply the current western forms and techniques in his drama. In fact Dwijendralal's dramas are most westernised among the dramas of Bengali literature.

In spite of his high intellectual attainments Dwijendralal was always simple and straightforward. He believed everybody and could not easily detect dubious dealing or any evil motive. Due to his gullibility and unsuspecting nature he was often duped by interested parties. His simplicity in nature was reflected in his dress. He had no fancy for any particular dress and he would always move with very plain dress without any artificial touch to any part of his body.

Dwijendralal was a champion of manly vigour, masculine strength and energy and indomitable will and determination. His songs have the electrifying power to awaken a nation and his dramas are full of the heroic battles for freedom. He had the vision of a nation brave, strong and heroic. He did not like anything which would lessen our strength and determination, dilute our firm resolve and soften our attitude to fight. Foppishness and shallow luxury in dress and make-up, too much humility and crouching modesty, effeminate voice and manners were very much detested by him. He wanted literature to be robust, throbbing with the energy of an invigorated life and beaming with clear ideas. Any literary piece which is dubious in meaning, clouded in mystery and softened in expression was repugnant to him.

In spite of so many allurements around him Dwijendralal could keep his character spotless. As long as his wife was alive he remained overwhelmed with her love. When his wife died he was only forty years and he lived for ten years more after that. During this time

offers were sent to him for remarriage but he declined every time. He spent long hours at night in the company of the actresses for their training in acting. In the midst of such environment his character remained untarnished. He had the highest respect for woman and he never indulged in any frivolity or any sort of weakness for any one of them. He had only one weakness and he could not overcome it till his death. In England he was addicted to drinking and he could not do away with it even after coming back to India. His wife protested against this injurious habit on many occasions and at times peace was disturbed in the family, but he failed to rectify himself. Due to this drinking habit his blood pressure was high which ultimately hastened his sudden and untimely death.

Dwijendralal's heart was full of love and tender care for all. He was deeply attached to his loving parents, he had unflinching fidelity to his wife Surabala whose memory was ever enshrined in his heart and he had unbounded affection for his two darlings— son Dilipkumar and daughter Maya Devi. After the death of their mother Dwijendralal poured all his heart for them. He reared them with his tender care and sweet affection. He was indeed their friend, philosopher and guide.

There has been some controversy regarding religious belief of Dwijendralal. Some of his friends have said that he was agnostic, he did not believe in the existence of God. But others have refuted this view. They have cited many instances from his poems and plays and asserted that though he did not believe any dogmatic religion, he had faith in the fundamentals of true religion, he was proud of the glorious tradition of the Hindu religion, a devotional song brought emotional tears to his eyes. It is true that after the death of his wife he became a bit sceptic and agnostic for some time but that was a passing phase. It is also true that some of his dramatic characters, such as Chanakya, Saktasingh etc. disbelieved the existence of God. But what led them to express such views should be kept in mind and their opinion in a disorderly state of mind should not be taken as the view of the author himself. Dwijendralal has opened his heart in deep devotion to that unseen power that pervades through all that is happening in this world. He has ended a song with this line— 'You are all, you are present in the whole universe, you are in every element of nature.' In 'Chandragupta'

the soul-stirring song of the beggar and his daughter hints at the mystery of life after death— 'The song is floating from across the other side of the great ocean— in sweet and doleful voice it calls— come hither, come hither by my side.' In a song hailing the mother Ganga the poet bows down to her praying for mercy— 'Hail to thee, mother Ganga, you bring salvation to the fallen people.' Such devotional writings cannot come from an agnostic or heretic.

Dwijendralal's songs and plays aroused national awakening on an unprecedented scale. Indeed among the writers his contribution to the national movement was next only to Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, the immortal composer of 'Vande-Mātaram'. Dwijendralal's patriotic songs were sung in the meetings, on the streets by the commoners and by the fighters of freedom-struggle. He was called *Chāran Kavi* (Ministrel-bard) by his grateful countrymen.

Even in his early youth Dwijendralal felt mortified for the bondage of his motherland and longed to see her free. In 'Bhārat Mātā' (Aryagāthā-I) the poet says— 'O my mother India! Why are you suffering so much insult? / My heart weeps to see your suffering.' When he was in England, far away from his motherland he could not for a moment forget his land which prompted him to write 'The lyrics of Ind' as the offerings of a patriot to his motherland. In the first poem of the collection entitled, 'The land of the sun' he says. 'O my land, can I cease to adore thee, / Though to gloom and misery hurled?'

Dwijendralal's inspiring patriotic songs and his historical plays full of valiant struggles for freedom carried the burning fire of the freedom movement to every heart of the Bengali people. In 1905 Lord Curzon, the then Governor General of India announced the decision of the British Government for the partition of Bengal. The whole nation rose unitedly and protested in one voice against this decision. The agitation against the Government spread like the burning fire from one corner of the country to another. The partition movement gradually turned into boycott movement, one section of the revolutionary activists became terrorists and went underground. In this background the theatre took a very important role in the national movement and by staging the patriotic dramas of Girishchandra Ghosh, Kshirod Prasad Vidyabenod and

Dwijendralal. It created among the people a will to fight and die for their motherland.

Dwijendralal was in the vortex of fire for the last ten years of his life. He was composing songs that had immediate electrifying effect. His famous songs – ‘Banga Āmār, Jananī Āmār, Dhātrī Āmār, Āmār Desh’ (My Bengal, My Mother, My Nurse, My Country), ‘Bhārat Āmār, Bhārat Āmār, Yekhane Mānab Melila Netra’ (My India, My India, Where Man first opened his Eye), ‘Yedin Sunil Jaladhī Hoite Uthile Jananī Bhāratvarṣa’ (Mother India, the day you arose from the blue waters of the sea). The songs bring before us the picturesque images of the beautiful country, the present calamity that has overtaken it and the glorious picture of freedom that lies ahead. The call is given for that ultimate goal. The stories of the historical play have been mostly taken from Tod’s Rajasthan where the heroic fights and sacrifices of the Rajputs against the Mughal aggressors have been shown in glowing terms. The soldiers of the freedom struggle in their fight against the British rule accepted the Rajput heroes as their national heroes and identified their fight for freedom with the freedom fight of the Rajputs. They fought for freedom with Rana Pratap Singh’s lofty ideal before them. Rana Pratap Singh’s supreme sacrifice for his mother-land, Govindasingh’s long fight against the aggressors, Satyavati’s mission to sing the glories of Mewar and awaken the masses, Mahamaya’s devotion to her motherland more than her attachment to her husband are shining examples of Dwijendralal’s patriotic fervor shown through his charactes.

Dwijendralal loved his country but he loved man more. That man is not confined within particular geographical boundaries. He was a staunch nationalist, but his ultimate goal was internationalism, the heroines of all his plays e.g. Ira (Pratap Singh), Razia (Durgadas), Manasi (Mevar Patan), Helen (Chandragupta) have protested against hatred, violence and war and they want peace, harmony and love. Manasi, daughter of Amarsingh preaches universal love in ‘Mevār Patan’. She stops war between the Rajputs and Mughals with these words—Forget who is your friend and who is your enemy. Give up all malice. Wash your uncleanness and the uncleanness of your country by the pure water of universal love. In ‘Chandragupta’ Helen has agreed to marry Chandragupta not out

of love for him but to bring about an ideal unity between the East and West. Helen says, 'This marriage has filled up the gap between two civilisations. A bridge has been built over the surging water of hatred. The two continents get united. Has there been any such marriage before? Is there any greater example of universal understanding anywhere else?' Dwijendralal has shown bitter enmity and the most exciting tumultuous battles between ruthless powers, but at the end there is peace between two sides. In 'Durgadas' the story ends with the mutual respect shown by Durgadas and Dilir Khan for one another. In 'Mevār Patan' the warring Rajput king Amarsing and the Mughal commander Mahabbat Khan embrace each other after fierce battle, the Hindu king Chandragupta and the Greek commander Selukos stop all enmity and become allies and close relatives. This is the attitude of Dwijendralal— after conflict and strife which provide all tense dramatic action it is only peace and amity in the end.

Songs

I

It has been discussed before when and in what circumstances Dwijendralal composed his songs, short accounts of the songs have also been given. It has been pointed out also that he was not only a composer, he was a very popular singer himself. Even risking his life he continued singing till the last years of his life. If we go through the songs we shall notice that he paid much careful attention to every aspect of a song. His songs, particularly his earlier songs are full of lyrical elements, he has experimented with a number of tunes which he has indicated on the top of the songs. He has also been very particular regarding the use of the metrical patterns according to the underlying ideas. He has also given much importance to the language of the song—the use of words and phrases, word-images, the construction of sentences, syntax etc. The songs may be divided into the following categories: a. Lyrical Songs, b. Songs of Laughter, c. Patriotic Songs, d. Dramatic Songs.

II

Lyrical Songs

Āryagāthā, I (1882). In the preface of this collection of songs the poet has said that the songs are meant to please those who are charmed by the beauties of nature and who shed tears for this ill-fated land. The first poem is an invocation to music—‘Come music, let us sit together, / Sad and charmed we shall be lost in our song.’ In this book no love-poem has been included as according to the poet it does not behove the Indians to sing any love song as long as this poverty, misery and destitution remain in India. There are four kinds of songs in Āryagāthā—1. Worship of nature, 2. Worship of God, 3. Mournful sighs 4. The Aryan lyre. In the first group of poems he has addressed nature as his mother and has sworn to sing in praise of her, in the second group he vows to defy death valiantly by the grace of God, in the third group of songs he gives vent to his

melancholy feelings in tearful language, in the last group of songs he wants to awaken India from its slumber. In the poem entitled 'Jwālāo Bhārat' (Enkindle India), he says, 'O India, enkindle in your heart the fire of zeal. We shall no more shed tears in grief'.

Āryagāthā, II

Āryagāthā, II (1894) was written at a time when his heart was overflowing with insatiable thirst for love, in his words— this thirst for love remains unfulfilled in life, this small heart, alas, cannot contain this limitless love. Unlike the first part the second part of Āryagāthā contains mostly love poems. There was a predominance of poetical elements in the poems of Part I, but in the second part, the songs are not dominated by poetry— no poetical embellishment, no ornamented language or decorated images, only the sweet fragrance of an underlying idea fills the air. Dwijendralal has proved his mettle as a translator in the translation of the poems from English, the translated poems are as fresh and lively as original.

Hāsir Gān (songs of laughter)

The comic songs of Dwijendralal published in two parts made him immensely popular with all sections of people. The popularity of the songs is due to – 1. Dwijendralal's perfect mastery over the comic art, 2. peculiar mixture of hybrid words, idioms and expressions, 3. variety of rhymes to produce comic effect and 4. distorted articulation of voice and comic presentation with jerks, pauses and coloring of tones. The main appeal is to our sense of enjoyment, hence in most cases the laughter without any sting, only in a few songs the satire is a bit caustic. The topics of the songs are classified as – mythological and historical, social, pertaining to nature, philosophical, relating to food and drinks, miscellaneous. Incongruity in time, place, motive, idea etc. evokes laughter. In the song entitled 'Tānsen-Vikramāditya' the poet causes the topsy-turvy of characters and their time and produce a comic effect –'Anyway came Tānsen to Calcutta by train/ And crossing the Hooghly bridge he went to Vikramāditya's house'. The poet's laughter has some burning sting when he banters those countrymen who after returning from England shamelessly imitate the Englishmen. In the song entitled 'Bilātpheṛtā' (Returned from England) he sings, 'We

laugh like Englishmen/ We cough like Frenchmen/ We very much like to smoke cigarettes with our legs apart'. Laughter is always caused by what is absurd and grotesque. An example of such laughter in the song entitled 'Natun Kichu Karo' (Do something new). 'Do something new, do something new/Cut all the noses clip all the ears/Raise your legs high and walk on your heads.'

Patriotic Songs

We have referred to the patriotic songs of Dwijendralal while discussing his patriotism. These songs still boil our blood and give an irresistible call to battle. The battles for freedom are over, but the songs have not yet lost their appeal. Dwijendralal has fully exploited his poetic talent to create image of nature to lead our soaring imagination to a make-believe world of beauty and plenty. Some lines from the song—'Ye din sunil jaladhi hoite'— 'The snowy peak is on your head/ The waist is bedecked with the waves of the sea,/ The necklace of pearls is hanging over your breast / The five seas, Yamuna and Ganga are there'. The poet arouses in us a nostalgic feeling for our glorious past and at the same time making us sad for our present fall— some lines are quoted from the song 'Bhārat Āmār Bhārat Āmār', —'Where the eternal hymns of the Vedas were sung by the Aryan sages/ Are you not, mother, that India?/ Are we not their descendents?' The songs always end with an inspiring call to march forward, come what may. Some lines are quoted from the noted poem—'Banga Āmār Jananī Āmār', 'What have you to suffer? What is your poverty? Why should you be ashamed? Where is the trouble? Seven crores of people call in one voice, my country.' The songs create an atmosphere surcharged with high emotional excitement for the fiery words, long-drawn metrical lines and the underlying heroic sentiment. Many of the songs were used in historical plays as dramatic songs which will be discussed below.

Dramatic Songs

Dwijendralal's comic songs were used in farces to produce hilariously comic effect and his patriotic songs were incorporated in historical plays to create a heroic atmosphere and intensify the struggle for freedom. The comic songs in relation to the farces will be discussed in proper place. Here dramatic songs of other varieties

used for dramatic purposes, which are integrated in the action and character of the play will be discussed. The dramatic songs may be classified into the following categories – 1. Romantic love-songs, 2. Light songs with dances, 3. Thought provoking reflective songs, 4. Patriotic songs.

Romantic love songs are generally sung by the romantic heroines whose moods and feelings, secret desire, dream, sadness and despair are expressed in the songs. Suja's wife Piyara soothes her worried husband in the battle field with the sweet balm of music – 'I have made this garland in the whole of morning/ I shall put the garland round your neck' (Sajahan, II). Chhaya, the poor tribal girl loved Chandragupta, but all her dreams have been dashed to the ground, she sings in despair, 'Let me share your all sorrow but you enjoy all happiness/ You laugh as you please, I only cry for you' (Chandragupta, V, III).

In historical plays nautch girls often cater entertainment in the court and harems. These erotic songs and dances were to the liking of the theatre-going public. The dancing girls engaged by Aurangzeb sing and dance before the inebriated Morad – 'My darling, I have come, I have come today with this laugh, this beauty and this song' (Sajahan, II, I). These songs are mainly meant for dramatic relief after tense action and excitement.

Dwijendralal has used some such songs which deeply move us. Two songs of the beggar and his daughter in Chadragupta not only indicate the inner working of Chanakya's mind, but hint at the imminent change of his character, we have referred to one song earlier, the first two lines of the other song are – 'The sky and the earth are covered with thick darkness/ The sea is roaring/ the boat is steering through it'. Dwijendralal uses some songs in some tense situations which immediately give rise to strong reaction in the mind of some character on the stage. The situation then becomes very dramatic. Often the playwright makes use of songs which create the atmosphere of the situation or hint at the inner conflict or hidden turmoil that is going on within the mind of a character on the stage.

The purpose of the historical plays is to arouse patriotic upsurge and that purpose has been best served by the songs. The male characters of the plays have fought battles, while the female

characters have inspired them with fiery songs. Satyavati and her minstrel singers set fire to every heart when they sing, 'You, the women of the country, awaken! Amarsingh and his heroic soldiers have come victorious in the battle.' Mahamaya's husband Yasobantasingh has returned from the battlefield defeated, but she says, her husband either wins the battle or sacrifices his life, he would not accept defeat,¹ she orders the gate of the castle to be closed against her husband. Unperturbed she orders her group of singers to continue singing— 'Married with a husband or a widow your head will remain high/ Arise you the brave women, tie your hair, and wipe the tear-drops'. (Sajahan, I, III) The clarion-call to battle has been given in the patriotic songs, an example is given here. Prithwiraj and his group of singers sing such a song— 'Go, go to the battle-field, sing aloud the ballads of war-victory/ Hear there calls Mother India to protect the oppressed religion' (Pratapsingh, IV, VII).

Poems

I

Dwijendralal was more renowned as a playwright but he was a poet of no mean order. He was bold enough to experiment with a new poetic form, he has brought down poetry from its high pedestal to the level of every day prose. His poetry has no misty, vague or dubious meaning, it is always straight, clear and distinct. In his critical estimate of 'Mandra', Rabindranath paid glowing tributes to Dwijendralal's indomitable self-confidence and fearless courage in introducing unconventional forms in his poetry. Dwijendralal's poetic language has not that sweep of imagination, rhetorical flourish and suggestiveness as we find in Rabindranath, but it is clear, unambiguous and solid as rock. There is no veiled meaning in his poetry, it is never shrouded in mystery and it has no scope for different interpretations. He has no bias against mixture of chaste and colloquial words— highflown literary words and expressions are used side by side with low and slang words. He had some particular fascination for colloquialism and idiomatic expression. The dramatic construction of sentences gives his poetry an extra pace and intensifies the underlying idea. His wit is sparkling and his use of rhetorical images is bold and unconventional. He has also broken many shackles in his metrical patterns, he is rather defiant in ignoring the traditional methods in his poetry.

II

Mandra (Loud Sound – 1902)

It is a collection of lyrical poems with assorted ideas. His tendency to give a sudden comic twist while reflecting on a serious matter is evident in many places. Indeed this mixture of sublime and ludicrous ideas gives a sudden jerk to the mind of the reader which is not very comfortable to him. In the poem 'Sukhamrityu' (Happy death) the poet says – 'When I shall die on my couch, let me die in peace/ Let no one implore me for a job'. His poem on Tajmahal is a

reflection of the transitoriness of life and eternity of love. The first lines of the last stanza are – ‘A monument unparalleled in beauty, O tears of love in marble! O marble image of death! / A long sigh made of marble!’ The poet went to visit Navadwip with his wife, the sacred place filled his mind with deep devotion for Sri Chaitanya and his Vaishnava religion, ‘Himalay Darshane’ (After visiting the Himalayas) and ‘Samudrer Prati’ (To the ocean) are two noted poems where in his own way he has delineated the serious aspects of nature.

Ālekhyā (Picture— 1907)

Ālekhyā contains nineteen pictures written after the death of his beloved wife. The husband in grief and the affectionate father has expressed his sad feelings and loving care for his son and daughter. ‘Ghumanta Sishu’ (Sleeping child), ‘Putra Kanyār Bibād’ (Quarrel between son and daughter), ‘Nūtan mātā’ (new mother), ‘Bipatnik’ (Widower), ‘Mātrihārā’ (Motherless) are the poems which reveal the personal feelings of that time. In the tenth picture the poet feels sympathy for the misfortune of widow— ‘At this time in the void of a room / Who are you lying on the ground / At the foot of the open window? / Looking all alone.’ In the poem on Sirajddaula the poet bemoans the sad end of the last independent Nabab of Bengal. In the poem entitled ‘Madyap’ (A drunken man) though written in a bit light vein, the poet seems to defend the case of a drunken man. It sounds as a plea for himself who could not shun this habit till his death.

Trivenī (Three courses – 1912)

‘Trivenī’, the last of his book of poems is the swan-song of the poet in which he bids adieu to all. In the last poem of the book named ‘Ābasān’ (The end) the poet says, ‘Forgive me for the agony that I have caused to you / Bless me for the pleasure that I have given to you.’ In this book the poet has not taken too much liberty with words and metrical patterns of the poems. Most of the poems are short lyrical pieces, only a few of them are longer poems. There are three categories of poems in the book, according to the metrical pattern, as it is regulated by— 1. Number of words, 2. Syllable 3. Ten lines form. He was against writing fourteen line sonnet. In his opinion ten-line poem is more suitable than fourteen-line poem.

Farces

I

In an autobiographical article entitled 'Āmār Nāṭya Jībaner Ārambha' (The beginning of my dramatic career) Dwijendralal has given an explanation for his writing farces. He has said that he was delighted to witness the natural fine acting in farces but he was pained to see obscenity and bad taste in them. It is clear from his statement how he was inspired to write farces but he is not justified to remark that he was pained at the obscenity and vulgarity in the farces, for his own farces also are not free from such charges. In this connection it may be pointed out that farces of all countries and in all ages including those of Aristophanes, Minander and Moliere have exceeded the limits of so-called decency and good taste. The laughter that is produced in farces is loud and excessive which can be caused only by improbable and exaggerated situations and characters. Professor Nicoll has said in 'The Theatre and Dramatic Theory', 'We expect and are given a rapid series of scenes in which improbability rules and exaggeration triumphs'. Dwijendralal has touched the surface of the social problems, but has not gone deep into them. He has caricatured the gods and goddesses which is not in good taste. His jibes and stings in many places seem to be too much severe, but he has no particular bias, nor partiality for any side. He has not shown any skill in construction of intriguing and suspenseful situations nor in creating complicated characters. He has produced laughter by grotesque caricature and topsy-turviness in characters and situations. Of course the main source of laughter is his highly laughable songs which provide unabated entertainment to the audience.

II

Kalki-Avatār (Incarnation of Kalki)

A farce of two acts. The target of Dwijendralal's attack is five communities— Fresh from England, Brahmo, Neo-Hindu, Orthodox, Scholar. In spite of the author's professed impartiality

his caustic satire is more pronounced than his harmless fun. As has been already said the main sources of laughter in this farce is the riotously comic songs. Some of the songs are—'If you want to know who are we/ We are Reformed Hindus'. 'Yes I say I will not laugh and I want to suppress it but to see such a thing I can not but go mad.' 'Ho the king Vikramaditya had nine jewels of councillors and nine brothers/ And Tansen was a great Ostad— once he came to the court.' The songs are not always relevant to the situation and consistent with the character who sings but the audience forgets everything in the boisterous merriment of the song. The hybrid use of the Bengali, English and Hindi words produce a highly comic effect. There are disjointed scenes and frequent interruptions by irrelevant situations. The distorted picture of the gods and goddesses is simply irritating.

Biraha (Separation) 1897

A farce of two acts. There is very little of sting in its laughter, it is so harmless and universally pleasing. The laughter here arises from situation. Temporary separation between husband and wife and their reunion through comic situation has been shown in the farce. It is written entirely in prose. The comic songs are inseparably connected with character and situation. Besides the main plot where Govinda and Nirmala are husband and wife there is a sub-plot of the servant Ramkanta and his long lost wife Golapi. The songs sung by the characters provide enjoyable comic laughter in the farce. When Govinda sings to his dark wife—'My mind is mad for that dark complexion, or while caressing his wife he joyfully sings, 'Everything is sweet from the hand of my beloved.' Golapi's light and joyful nature is reflected in hilarious songs,— 'Laugh away every thing, life is too short.' The play ends with a comic song sung in chorus— 'If you want to go with a single wife/She has to be renewed now and then/Without the fuel of separation the fire of love does not burn.'

Tryahasparsha (Juncture of three days), 1900

This farce is full of incidents and words which have exceeded all limits of decency and good taste. Indeed the author himself was conscious of the obscenity and vulgarity of the farce and

discontinued its reprinting. Bejoygopal, Anandagopal and Kishoregopal are the three evil days and their touch has made their families none too happy. The other name of this farce 'Sukhī Parivār' (Happy family) has been ironically given by the playwright. The most indecent dialogues and the distortion of family relationship are extremely galling. Unseemly quarrel among father, son and grandson over the possession of a common bride is to say the least obnoxious. The only redeeming feature of the farce is its songs. The comic songs of Raja and the romantic song of Sephalika are most enjoyable.

Prāyaschitta (Atonement), 1902

In the introduction of the second edition of the play the playwright has said that it is not a farce but a comedy. Of course farce comes under broad genre of comedy, but farce is so called for some peculiar features. It must be short in size, its main purpose is to produce laughter which is loud and unending. It may touch only the fringe of some social problems, but it never penetrates deep into the problems. Laughter here arises from intriguing situations and there is always a tendency towards exaggeration. These peculiar features are present in this play. Hence the play must come under the category of farce only. In this play the author has shown the evils of the artificial society of the indigenous Sahibs who have returned from England. Mr. Champati is the representative of this society, hero of many glorious deeds indeed, e.g. marrying an English woman and leaving her in England, compelling another wife here to earn money, abandoning her marrying again a widow for money, and again leaving this wife for the loss of money. But why he is required to atone and how he has turned a real Bengali—these things are not clear. How excess of woman's liberalisation can bring about chaotic condition has been shown in a comic way. The wives of Umesh, Ramesh, Paresh and Suresh were educated according to the wish of their husbands and having acquired all ways and means to move and act freely how they cornered their husbands has been shown in the play. The main source of laughter in this play is sparkling dialogue. This dialogue is funny in places for the onomatopoeic sounds of the English words, in other places it is witty and sharp and in some other places it is short and racy. As in

either plays here also the most enjoyable part is the songs. Some of the songs are in unmixed English language as— 'We oriental beauties—/Did our domestic duties/ As we are by nature fit;/ To teach us different wholly/ Was your stupendous folly.' Another duet song sung by Champati and Rebecca in English is also very funny,— 'In this view of the case, my love, I thoroughly agree.'

Punarjanama (Re-birth), 1911

This play written after a long time since the author wrote his last farce is a story of a miser and usurer Jadav Chakravarti who has been taught a good lesson for his miserliness through hilarious situations. There is some similarity between Moliere's 'The Miser' (*L'Avare*) and this play and Dwijendralal may have been influenced by Moliere's comedy. There is no doubt that this is the best farce written by him. Like the previous farces this is not dependent on the song for its comic appeal, the well-contrived plot though full of exaggerated events maintains suspense till the end and produce riotous laughter. A carefully planned plot in which Jadav's wife and his brother-in-law take the leading parts leads to intriguing situations in which Jadav is pronounced dead by his relatives and arrangements are made in right earnest for his cremation. The bewildered Jadav desperately tries to prove that he is not dead, he is very much alive. But no body pays any heed to his words, he is bullied and threatened and at last the police is called to arrest him for false impersonation. The police-sub inspector gives a good thrashing and he confesses that he is not Jadav Chakravarti, he is Madhav Chakravarti. At last his wife and brother-in-law take pity on him and save him from his predicament. Now Jadav Chakaravarti is a changed man, he sings—'The chest full of money/ It is futile to keep it closed./ If the money is not spent for the good of others/ If it is not used/ That money is on the shoulder of a richman/ Like a basket of a street porter only.' Very good utterance indeed from a chastised and changed man! The incidents in many places of this farce are hard to believe, but the fact is that the question of reason and probability should be suspended before enjoying such a farce.

Ānanda-Bidāy (Farewell to Ānanda), 1912

It is the last comic play, which can be termed a low comedy of the

author. Dwijendralal has called it a parody play. (Parody on Atulkrishna Mitra's *Nanda-Bidāy*). The playwright has said that the purpose of parody is not satire but fun. But there is very little harmless fun in it, it is rather full of vituperative attack, and that is also on personal level. There was a loud protest from some sections of the audience when this play was staged at the Star Theatre and the performance was never repeated for the second time. The abstruseness and so called obscenity of Rabindranath's poems have been indecently attacked in the play. The play itself is a loose combination of some disjointed and improbable scenes making no impression on the minds of the audience.

In this connection it may be said that this play is the culmination of the strained relation between the two contemporary greats—Rabindranath and Dwijendralal. Their relation at one time was very cordial, but that relation grew gradually bitter over their literary ideals and artistic activity. Dwijendralal was a staunch believer in clear and straightforward ideas, so he did not like Rabindranath's poems shrouded in mystery or veiled in meaning. He also complained against the obscenity in Rabindranath's poems. This question has been discussed before and it has been pointed out that Dwijendralal's charge is untenable and for there is no less so-called obscenity in his literature than in that of Rabindranath. Dwijendralal liked masculine ideas and expressions and his attitude was straight, bold and inspiring, he did not like the soft, timid and effeminate approach of the Rabindra followers. Due to such differences in attitude to art and culture that Dwijendralal became hostile to Rabindranath.

Mythological plays

I

Dwijendralal wrote three mythological plays 'Pāṣāṇī', 'Śītā' and 'Bhīṣma'. 'Pāṣāṇī' and 'Śītā' are poetical dramas and 'Bhīṣma' is written mainly in prose with poetical dialogues here and there. The question may arise why he at all wrote mythological plays because he had no particular devotion to the gods and goddesses, rather he caricatured them in his songs and farces. It should be remembered that immediately before him Girischandra Ghosh and his contemporaries flooded the Bengali theatre with mythological and devotional plays and created an unprecedented religious upheaval towards the last part of the nineteenth century. But Dwijendralal did not follow this religious stream, he came down to the people to lead them in their struggle and lift them from their suffering. Only for the sake of some experiment with the tradition of religious drama he wrote three dramas based on the Ramayana and Mahabharata. But unlike the religious dramas of Girischandra and his contemporaries there is no supernatural element nor any attempt to arouse faith and devotion in the minds of the audience. He has treated the gods and goddesses as ordinary human beings with their failings, wrongs and vices. But his tendency to caricature the gods and goddesses to produce laughter is in bad taste. He has given a new interpretation to the mythological characters often questioning the reverential view and taking the cause of the ignored and neglected characters. Often he has championed the cause of woman and protested against age-old injustice to womanhood. In short there is no spiritual or devotional element in the mythological plays, only complicated human relation in the context of the modern human society has been studied with a free, rational and humanistic attitude.

Pāṣāṇī (The woman in stone), 1900

The first mythological play in verse. He has not yet bidden good-bye to the world of light comic song and farces, hence he has not been able to check his tendency to lampoon the serious characters

and interrupt proceedings by irrelevant nonsensical dialogues and songs. The revered sage Viswamitra has been painted as a buffoon. The story is taken from the Rāmāyaṇa, but the dramatist has turned it into a romantic psychological plot. Indra's infatuation for the revered wife of his Guru Gautama, impersonating Gautama for the fulfillment of his lust, Gautama's curse to Indra and Ahalya have been shown in the play. That Ahalya turned into a stone by Gautama's curse has not been mentioned in the original Valmiki Ramayana, but both Krittibas and Tulsidas have mentioned this and they have also said that Ahalya was restored to her human life by the divine touch of Rama's feet. In the Valmiki Ramayana Ahalya has recognised Indra and has also enjoyed to her full satisfaction her sexual union with Indra, but in the Bengali version she has been painted as quite innocent. Dwijendralal has followed the original Rāmāyaṇa and refuted the charge of obscenity against him. But he has vulgarised the character of Indra in a most unseemly manner. But Goutama has been delineated as a liberal, forgiving noble character, nonetheless his heart is filled with inner current of love for Ahalya. Unrequited emotion and unfulfilled physical desire have been shown by the author with deep sympathy and understanding. Madhuri is an antithesis to Ahalya, her unflinching love and devotion to her worthless, dishonest husband has been shown with equal sympathy by the author.

Sītā, 1902

Sītā, undoubtedly the best mythological play of Dwijendralal is based on Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa and Bhababhūti's Uttara Rama Charita. It seems he is particularly indebted to Bhababhūti for portraying the inner conflict and the grim tragedy of Rāma, there is no trace of vulgarisation of revered characters and unseemly intrusion of comic songs and buffoonery in this play. There is an atmosphere of high seriousness all through the play, the dramatic action is tense with suspense and existing situations and the characters are very lively with conflicting emotions and tormenting feelings. The author has said in the introduction of the play that the character of Sītā with her noblest virtues and divine purity and supreme sacrifice ever filled his mind with deep reverence and unlimited pity which he has tried to show in his portrayal of Sita in

this play. The author has shown originality in inventing some incidents and situations. Sita has been shown in taking decision herself to go on exile. A heated debate has taken place between Vālmiki and Baṣiṣṭha, Vālmiki taking the side of love and Baṣiṣṭha that of duty. The author has established the superiority of love to duty. The dramatic intensity of the last scene is most exciting. Valmiki has come to the court with Lava and Kuśa, the happiest moment has come, Rāma has got back Sītā and Lava, Kuśa. Suddenly the earth cracks open and Sītā goes beneath the earth. A portion of the dialogue :

Sītā – Catch hold of me, my lord.

Rāma – Where you may be!

Sītā – My lord, where are you?

Rāma – (Aloud) – Sītā!

Sītā (from the underground) – My lord!

Rāma – Where are you?

Sītā – (Faint voice buried underground) –

Where you may be?

The frantic voice of the frenzied Rāma reverberates in the air— Sītā-Sītā-Sītā. Being influenced by Bhababhūti the poet Dwijendralal has given exquisitely poetical description of the natural beauty of the exiled forest life of Rāma and Sītā. The dramatist has depicted the character of Sītā with utmost care and devotion. Sītā is the ideal of womanhood, but the dramatic importance of Rāma is greater than that of Sītā. Rama took the oath before the sage Aṣṭabakra that he would sacrifice affection, kindness, happiness and even Sītā for the sake of pleasing his subjects. For pleasing his subjects he stood against his near and dear ones, though sure of Sītā's innocence he banished her, knowing even unjust he killed Śūdraka. In the large palace he is lamenting for his deed all alone. His forlorn heart cries, Sītā-Sītā-Sītā. Who has made so much sacrifice like Rāma? Who has suffered so much like Rāma?

Bhīṣma, 1913

This play was published after the death of the playwright. In his preface to the drama the author says, there is no greater character in Mahabharata than Bhīṣma. He could not control his intention to write a drama on such a great character. He has taken recourse to

pure imagination in some places of the play. He has kept in fact the highest and noblest traits of Bhīṣma's character, but he has shown exemplary courage in exposing the burning fire of Satyawati's uninhibited desire for sex gratification. Eternal youth is not a boon but a curse to her. Repression and inhibition have only aggravated the burning desire. Another tragic character is Ambā whose intense love for Bhīṣma has ended only in utter frustration. Her humiliated love has at last turned into cruel vengeance which has been the cause of Bhīṣma's death. In the midst of unholy acts of unbridled desire and its deplorable end Ambikā and Ambālīka are two joyful girls who bring unmitigated pleasure to our minds. Among all the characters Bhīṣma stands like the highest peak of the Himalayas, his determined vow, unmatched magnanimity and unparalleled valour fill our minds with awe and wonder.

Historical plays

I

Dwijendralal's last and best phase of his dramatic career started in 1905 and continued till 1909. Within that period he wrote his famous historical plays. Before 1905 he wrote his first historical play 'Tārābāi', but that was in verse. After 1909 he wrote some social plays and some other assorted plays. But his unique contribution as dramatist mainly rests upon his historical plays which though limited in number are among the best that have been produced in Bengali literature.

It will not be out of place here to discuss in short the different phases of historical drama, the social background which prompted the growth of this drama in some particular periods of history and the impact of this on the minds of the theatre audience. The first historical play *Krishnakumari* was written by Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73). After that there was a spurt of the historical plays written by Jyotirindranath Tagore (1848-1925) and others from 1870 to 1880 under the influence of the nationalist movement started by Hindu Mela. In this connection it may be mentioned that the historical plays were written only at such time when the peoples' minds were agitated over some political movement. The historical plays brought before them a glorious past full of noble ideals, heroic deeds and supreme sacrifices. The people were inspired by this past and resolved to restore that pristine glory by strong determination, undeterred idealism and ceaseless struggle for freedom. After 1880 the peoples' minds were occupied by the spiritual and devotional ideas and ideals as there was a revival of rejuvenated religious movement among the masses. So there was a lull in the political movement at the time and also there was not much demand for historical plays. The glorious era of historical plays came after about twenty five years, to be precise just in the beginning of the twentieth century. It has been discussed before how the Bengal Partition Movement awakened the masses to voice their united protest against the proposed partition and how it turned into a political agitation on

an unprecedented scale. The leading dramatists of that time Girischandra Ghosh, Kshirod Prasad Vidyabenod and Dwijendralal wrote historical plays which took the whole nation by storm. Of them it can be said without fear of contradiction that Dwijendralal's plays made the greatest impact on the minds of the audience, they continued for longer time in the theatre and influenced the further course of historical plays more than the plays of any other dramatist. The plays like 'Sājāhan', 'Nurjāhān' and 'Chandragupta' are still produced at professional and amateur theatres which unmistakably prove the popularity of the plays.

Dwijendralal has said in his autobiographical article entitled *Āmār Nātyajībaner Ārambha* 'The beginning of my dramatic career' that he was fond of reading Shakespeare again and again, he witnessed performance of Shakespeare's plays here and in England. Hence when he started writing full length serious plays he followed Shakespearean model in regard to form and structure of the plays. In this connection it may be pointed out that since Michael Madhusudan Dutta, the first dramatist to follow the western model, Bengali drama adopted the Shakespearean plot-structure, characterisation, tragic form and some other technical methods used by Shakespeare.

Like Shakespearean drama Dwijendralal's drama is also divided into five acts and each act has several scenes. The dramatic action of his drama also rises from exposition to a highest point of excitement called climax and from there the falling action ends in denouement or catastrophe. In the Elizabethan stage painted scenes in the background were not used. To compensate for that the Elizabethan dramatists used short scene to indicate where the action was happening. Dwijendralal also following the Elizabethan tradition used short scenes, but action within short scenes ends abruptly and fails to create any impact. Moreover frequent change of scenes causes many problems for production. Hence in the realistic drama of Ibsen scenic division has been abolished and only the act-division has been retained.

The Elizabethan audience wanted prolonged plays, hence to please them sub-plots had to be added to the main plots. The plot-structure of the romantic drama admit unity in diversity. Dwijendralal's drama also has one or more sub-plots attached to it.

In Pratāpsingha there are two sub-plots – 1. the story of Śaktasingha and Daulat O Meher and 2. the story of Prithwi and Joshi. In ‘Mevār-Patan’ the main plot is well-knit with two sub-plots – 1. the tragic family story of Govindasingha and 2. the episode of Sagarsingha, Satyavati and Mahabbat Khan. There are several sub-plots in Sajāhan but all of them have been well-integrated with the main plot.

In the Shakespearean romantic drama highly serious and comic scenes are shown side by side. Dwijendralal’s drama also present the tragic and comic elements mixed together. Shakespeare has used crowd scenes for the sake of relief and also for communicating popular reaction to the rule or dictates of the ruling power. The curious crowd of onlookers in Act V, Sc VII in ‘Rana Pratapsingha’ reminds one of the similar scenes in *Julius Caesar*. In Act I, Sc III of *Nurjahan* the citizens on the street are indulging in gossiping and rumour mongering besides providing light humour throw some light on what is happening in the background.

Dwijendralal has maintained high voltage dramatic action in all his dramas. This has been possible for his superb skill in making the best use of the elements which make the dramatic action so intense, animated and exciting. The gripping suspense that has been skilfully maintained in many crucial situation intensifies the dramatic action. The court-scene (Act II, Sc V) where Aurangzib and Jahanara face each other to establish supremacy, the scene (Act III, Sc VI) where Nanda is beheaded and Chanakya’s regaining his lost daughter (Act V, Sc II) may be cited as some examples of intense suspenseful scenes. The clash of titanic personalities where both sides are equally poised creates tense excitement in the situation. When Govindasingha, the last of the heroes of Mewar faces the mighty commander of the Mughals to defend his motherland the situation is extremely exciting (Act V, Sc. IV –Mewar Patan). Nurjāhān advances to arrest Mahabbat Khan herself, the whole court is tense with excitement (Nurjahan –Act III, Sc VIII). Dwijendralal abruptly changes the course of action by an unexpected turn of events which suddenly excites the audience. In the above-mentioned scene of ‘Nurjāhān’ as Nurjahan advances to arrest Mahabbat Khan throwing the challenge, ‘Who has the guts to obstruct me?’ All on a sudden Layla, her daughter jumps before her and says, ‘Yes, I have

those guts'. After the victory of Chandragupta over the Greeks Mura, Chandragupta's mother comes to tell Chhaya who has given every thing for her love for Chandragupta that she will be married to Chandragupta. As Chhaya forgets herself in unexpected joy Chanakya comes and tells them about his decision to marry Chandragupta with Helen. There is the unexpected turn of events in the opposite direction (Act IV, Sc VI). Suddenness of entrance and exit of characters causes quick change of action in the reverse direction. In Nanda's court Mura, mother of Chandragupta has been brought by Nanda's men. Nanda and his henchmen are heaping insults upon her to extort information from her regarding the whereabouts of Chandragupta, Bachal even physically assaults her. As Nanda thunders, 'Speak out, where is Chandragupta.' At that moment Chandragupta rushes inside and retorts, 'Here is Chandragupta before you'. (Act I, Sc III). Such unexpected entrance or exit seems to be on the verge of improbable, but what is improbable may be extremely dramatic.

Dwijendralal's art of characterisation is masterly. His historical characters are what Bradley has said about Shakespearean characters—'men in high estate'. Pratapsingha, Sajahan, Aurangzib, Nurjāhān, Govindasingha, Chandragupta are the mighty historical characters who have come down from history to take part in the dramatic action with extraordinary bravery, courage and exemplary valour. They have moved like tornado, they have been involved in violent clashes with mighty adversaries. They have won or lost as in history. But they are not merely historical persons, they are more than that. As Aristotle has said, ... 'for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular'. The particular persons of history have relived in drama as universal persons. They have loved, dreamed, suffered and lost, they have been tormented by internal conflict, they have committed errors, they have been haunted by irrepressible passion and have met their ultimate doom. Bradley while analysing the Shakespeare's characters says, ... 'as a rule the hero, though he pursues his fated way, is at least at some point in the action and sometimes at many, torn by an inward struggle, and it is frequently at such points that Shakespeare shows his most extraordinary power'. This inward struggle is seen in many characters of Dwijendralal too. Aurangzib committing most

pernicious crimes one after another is also haunted by the spectre of retribution, Chanakya is the supreme ruler of India, terror of all, but his inward self cries for his lost daughter, Nurjahan's heart is torn asunder between her loyalty to the memory of her husband Sher Khan and her vaulting ambition to rule India. Such inward struggle has made the characters so lively and interesting.

Shakespeare's influence is evident in a number of characters. Like King Lear Sajahan has suffered for too much affection for his sons. The forlorn cries rend the sky as we have found in case of Lear. Aurangzib may be called a prototype of the ruthless villain Richard III. Jahangir may have been influenced by Antony who forgets his every thing for his mad infatuation for Cleopatra. Nurjahan's evil genius and lust for power can be compared with Goneril only. Dildar in *Sajahan* is like Fool in *King Lear*—not a buffoon, but highly critical and deeply sympathetic.

Dwijendralal wrote his first historical play 'Tarabai' in verse form but after that he wrote all plays in prose. But he has fully utilised his poetic genius in his prose dialogue. No dramatist's prose dialogue except that of Rabindranath is as poetically embellished as the dialogue of Dwijendralal. Nature in variety of moods, colours and forms has been described by the dramatist. In the opening scene of Chandragupta on the bank of the river Indus the enraptured Alexander in an imaginative mood gives a colourful picture of the variegated nature of India. Dwijendralal's poetic imagination is at its best here. The intensity of emotion in the characters is due to the powerful, resonant and richly decorated words. The use of similes and metaphors and particularly figures based on contrast, e.g. epigram, antithesis, oxymoron etc. His words are sharp, chiselled and his wit is sparkling. He often used contradictory words and expression to suggest the inward conflict of the character. An example : The Kazi has awarded the death-sentence to Dara only to please Aurangzib. Aurangzib while holding that death sentence is in a conflicting mood—'This is the judgement of the Kazi—I am not to blame—but I—no-no—why—this is the judgement of Kazi. Why should I interfere in justice—this is justice.' (Act IV, Sc V). Sometimes a word is repeated several times only to lay particular emphasis. When Sītā disappears under earth the bewildered Rāma cries out in a frenzy—Sītā-Sītā-Sītā. The repetition of the same

word universalises the grief of a forlorn soul. Sometimes intended words are not spoken and the sentences remain unfinished, but unspoken words and unfinished sentences are more eloquent and expressive.

Like Shakespeare Dwijendralal also shows a strange relation between the external forces of nature and inner working of the mind of character. King Lear cries in frenzied rage when the mad elements of nature are creating havoc in the wilderness— 'And thou, all shaking thunder. /Strike flat the thick rotundity O' the world.' Sajahan also raves in the midst of the tumultuous scenes of nature —'You the mad forces, strike, strike and strike, the earth will tolerate everything silently.' Dwijendralal has shown masterly skill in making the dialogues short or long, the rise and fall at different stages, the building up of climax etc. There are some dialogues which are elongated, in such dialogue a chain of ideas come one after another, the action rises gradually to climax generating too much excitement. There is another pattern of dialogue where the speeches are very short and very quick-paced. Here also the tempo gradually rises and quickly reaches the culminating point. The scene where Chanakya gets back his lost daughter may be cited as an example of this pattern of dialogue. Shakespeare has used two technical devices in his drama, soliloquy and aside. Soliloquy is a monologue recited by an actor when he is left alone on the stage. Shakespeare's soliloquy is the best part of the dialogue which is the specimen of highest poetry and where the internal thoughts of the character are reflected. Dwijendralal's soliloquies help us to probe into the inner working of their minds. Aside was used by Dwijendralal in his earlier dramas but in his later dramas he discontinued it.

How much Dwijendralal was influenced by Shakespeare is discussed above, but he was also influenced by Ibsen in many ways. He has referred to Ibsen in his essay of 'Kalidas O Bhababhūti'. It is a clear proof of his acquaintance with modern drama movement of the world. Ibsen, a critic of the romantic drama of Shakespeare introduced realism in drama. His ideas were revolutionary and he questioned the long-cherished values of family life and revolted against the male-dominated society. He also brought about revolutionary changes in the dramatic form and method and made his drama production-oriented. Dwijendralal stuck to the

Shakespearean form of five acts with multiplicity of scenes. But like Ibsen he also has made his drama production-oriented. Like Ibsen he also has given detailed stage-direction at the beginning of each scene, the direction of light, set, stage-property is given in minute details. Not only at the beginning, as the action proceeds he gives detailed direction to the actor or actress regarding their movement, expression and composition. Sometimes he adopts the method of a novelist and narrates the dramatic situation and action at length. Aside is considered to be unrealistic and so aside is not in use in modern realistic drama. Dwijendralal probably under the influence of Ibsen has done away with the Shakespearean aside. Dwijendralal must have been influenced by Ibsen in showing revolt of women against the established order of the society. Many women characters have echoed the fiery words of Nora and Mrs. Alving. Modernity in Bengali drama began from Dwijendralal.

II

Tarabai, 1903

Tarabai is the first historical play of Dwijendralal. It was preceded by his comic songs and farces. Hence the comic influence is not altogether absent in this play. It is evident in some characters and also in the comic songs included in the plot. The drama is based on the Annals of Rajasthan, Vol I, Ch-VIII. The originality of the dramatist lies in the internal conflict of Suryamal, in unravelling the mystery of Tamasa's character and showing the pristine glory of Tarabai. But the most living characters of the drama are Suryamal and his wife Tamasa. It seems the characters of Macbeth have influenced the portrayal of these two characters. Like Macbeth Suryamal, brother of Rana is ambitious for the throne and like the witches the Charani's (street-minstrel) foretelling only aggravates that ambition, the bitter conflict between his ambition and affection has made the character more interesting. Torn between contradictory instincts this condemned unfortunate woman has been really a tragic character. Dwijendralal has written this drama in blank verse. He has tried to introduce some novelty in blank-verse which has not made it at all graceful and easy-flowing. The elongated verbs have made this blank-verse more artificial and unacceptable.

Dwijendralal himself understood that this blank-verse is not suitable for historical play and hence he discontinued it in his next historical plays. But it can not be denied that in spite of its defects Tarabai first established Dwijendralal as a dramatist.

Rānā Pratāpsingha, 1905

Dwijendralal's renowned historical play started from 'Rana Pratap Singha' which was written and produced at a time when the Bengal Partition movement moved the masses with unprecedented patriotic agitation. There could not be any greater drama to inspire the people in their struggle for freedom. One of the greatest names in Indian history, Pratap Singha's valour, sacrifice and suffering for his motherland have been shown in all their glory. Tod has said in Rajasthan, 'There is not a pass in the alpine Aravulli that is not sanctified by some deed of Pratap— some brilliant victory or oftener more glorious defeat.' Though a king he is poorer than poor, to reserve the glory of his clan he has lost the help of many Rajput heroes, he has abandoned his own dear brother Sakta Singha and to punish the guilty he has lost his most devoted wife. His heroic defeat, failure of his noble effort and tragic wailing of his shattered hope have been prominently shown in the drama. But Sakta Singha's character is colourful, lively with contradictory instincts and eventful with strange incidents. He is valiant, insolent and relishes to satire. He has no attachment to life, no respect for society and religion, no weakness for love and soft instinct. But even he is at last conquered by Daulatunnisa's (Akber's niece) love. Daulatunnisa and Meherunnissa (Akber's daughter), who have taken shelter in Pratap's palace are two lively characters, both of whom have loved Sakta Singha. The author has shown the all-conquering force of love dominating over nationality and religion. Ira, Pratap Singha's daughter is the symbol of universal love and world-peace, but the character is a bit colourless. There are some abrupt incredible situations in the play which cause dramatic shocks, such as Ira's arrival at the Mughal camp to meet Sakta Singha, Meherunnissa leaving the Mughal harem and taking shelter with Pratap's family, Pratap shooting his own lustful son, Sakta Singha giving three kicks at Selim etc. Akber has been shown as character with mixed qualities.

He is liberal and appreciative of other, but he is licentious and hater of women.

Duragādās, 1906

Dwijendralal in his preface to the drama says, 'The Hindu reading public has been reading the defeat of its own nation at the hands of the foreigners in novels and dramas (except 'Raj Singha'). After reading the series of defeats one after another will not the victory of Durgadas sound pleasing to them?. In the thirteenth chapter of 'Rajasthan' the victory of the united strength of the Rajputs has been narrated. Dwijendralal has shown in this drama in an inspired way the glorious war of the Rajputs and the rise of the fallen Hindus. But not only the national heroism but rare personal glory has been shown in this play. He has selected the character of Durgadas as the representative of fighting nation and a symbol of incomparable human virtues. He got some materials from history, but the picture of Durgadas as a symbol of complete manliness has been the product of his original conception. There has been a rare combination of exemplary courage, fierce heroism, broad magnanimity and firm self-restraint in his character. But an uncompromising idealist has to lose many things, he has to suffer a lot. He fought to the last to protect Ajit Singh and the latter banished him from his kingdom, he was like a god to the commanders and he was at last forsaken by them, he tried to bring Sambhuji to the right path and he was driven away by that Sambhuji. He wanted to be good to everybody but everybody misunderstood him. Everyone did injustice to him. Here is his tragedy. The scattered incidents and multiplicity of characters have marred the concerted appeal of the drama. Aurangzib in his old age is a frustrated, sad person as he has been painted here. Devoid of dominating power, bereft of unquestioned authority Aurangzib defeated by the Rathors and Rajputs, ignored by Durgadas and Diler Khan, hated by Gulnair, is an object of pity and sympathy. Gulnair, the empress is the most lively character of the play. She is a towering personality like Clytemnestra and Goneril. She is not cowed down by anyone, nor she is ashamed to openly parade her guilt. Dwijendralal's liberal outlook and his noble ideals for human unity and universal love have been preached through many characters.

Nurjāhān, 1906

In the preface to this drama Dwijendralal mentions that there are some points on which this play is a departure from the previous ones. First, he has not portrayed any god-like character in this play, here he has drawn human characters with both good and dark sides of them. Secondly he has been more engaged in showing inner struggle rather than outer struggle. Thirdly he has stopped using aside if a second man is present on the stage. These three points indicate that Dwijendralal discovered his own modern realistic method and ideas and reached the summit of his genius from Nurjāhān. Indeed though there may be controversy to decide which is the best drama of Dwijendralal, yet there is no doubt that it is one of the best and as a tragedy it is one of the very best in Bengali literature. A woman can be a really tragic character if she has some masculine qualities in her severity of purpose, sternness of determination, indomitable will, dogged tenacity and fierce fighting capacity. Nurjāhān has all these qualities. Her fall has the majestic sadness of a grim tragedy and it arouses a feeling of awe allied to lofty grandeur (Nicoll).

The whole drama seems to be the battlefield of tumultuous elements at war with one another. As the play opens we see a picture of conjugal happiness in Sher Khan and Nurjāhān's family, but that is illusory, for soon the news reaches them that the emperor Akber is dead and Selim has ascended the throne. Nurjāhān's love for Selim which was lying dormant in her mind suddenly begins to agitate her violently. She is tossed between her loyalty to her husband and secret love for Jahangir. Sher Khan who loved Nurjāhān more than his life noticed the change in her and rudely shocked he wanted to die and set Nurjahan free. The bullet of the assassin sent by Jahangir served this purpose. Nurjāhān's mental conflict increased much more, she thought herself responsible for the death of her husband. Left all alone she began to spend her days in frustration, remorse and repressed desire. Her brother Asaf, daughter Layla and others induced her to marry Jahangir to wreak vengeance for Sher Khan's murder. At last she agreed— not to enjoy the fruits of long cherished love but burn like a volcano to cause large-scale havoc and devastation. Like Antony forgetting everything for Cleopatra, Jahangir also surrendered his kingdom to the reigning

beauty of Nurjahan. The meteoric rise of Nurjahan began step by step to the pinnacle of power. She selected one by one the persons near and dear to Jahangir and crushed them. Her cruel and diabolical acts gave rise to discontent and revolt on a large scale and her adversaries combined together against her. At last war broken out between Nurjāhān and the combined strength of Sajahan, Mahabbat Khan and Karna Singh. The mighty empress led the army herself but after battles the war was lost by Nurjahan. Jahangir died and Sajahan ascended the throne. The end of this 'Light of the World' was extremely dark. The rise was like a meteor and the fall was also like that. The paragon of beauty turned to be an old woman all on a sudden uttering incoherent words. But there is a method in her madness as she speaks out the truth while raving at the end— 'Meherunnisa killed Sher Khan, Nurjahan killed Jahangir (roaring of clouds). Hark, there is the voice of Jahangir! How pathetic— what was the weapon to kill him? It was beauty— yes beauty— otherwise he would not die. Nobody would die— she could not check herself with her beauty. After killing them she poisoned herself. Meherunnisa died and also died Nurjāhān.

Nurjāhān has naturally dominated the proceedings of the playwright from the beginning to the end. But still there are other characters also which are well-drawn and through them the dramatist has laid bare before us the mystery and truth of life. Sher Khan and Jahangir are the two main characters who have brought about their doom by their insatiable infatuation for the beauty of woman. Jahangir is just, upright, broad-minded and far-sighted ruler but all his good qualities have been in vain. Layla, Nurjahan's daughter is like Electra of Greek drama who could not forgive her mother for helping Aegisthus to murder her father Agamemnon. But we see in this drama, Layla having a love and hate relation with her mother. Electra incited her brother Orestes to murder her mother, but Layla stands by her unfortunate mother in the end to give all solace and consolation to her.

Mevār-Patan (Fall of Mevar), 1908

Dwijendralal has said in the preface of this drama that this is the first didactic drama that he has written. If didactic drama means drama with a purpose it must be admitted that such dramas have

been written before. In fact every drama is written by him with a purpose. The dramatist says, in this drama he proposes to preach a new philosophy and that is universal love, Kalyani, Satyavati and Mānasi, the three female characters of the drama stand for conjugal love, love for the country and universal love respectively. Universal love has been shown as the highest form of love. Of the dramas written on Mevār this is undoubtedly the most tragic. The contents of the drama truly justify the titles. The heroism, tireless endeavour and brave battles to defend the motherland Mevār have all been in vain, the final defeat and fall bring tears to one and all. Though the dramatist has said that the purpose of this drama is to propound the ideal of universal love, the theme of the drama is the love of motherland and the plot has been developed on this theme from the beginning to the end. Pratap Singha's son Amar Singha is on the throne of Mevār. The Mughal army has invaded Mevār, but Amar Singha is hesitant and wants a compromise but the trusted commander of Mevār, the valiant Govinda Singha and Satyavati, a street minstrel give a clarion call of battle against the Mughals to which every one responds including the Rana. The Rajput and Mughals are involved in the fierce battles. Govinda Singha is the leading figure among the Rajputs. A man of strictest principles he has cut off all connection with his daughter Kalyani because she is still devoted to her husband, Mughal commander Mahabbat Khan who is now a converted Islam. Govinda Singha also parted company with his son who took the side of his sister. Being left alone he guarded the fort of Udaypur even after the defeat of Mevār. He died by the bullet of an assassin while fighting with his own son-in-law Mahabbat Khan. His death symbolises the fall of Mevār. Satyavati's songs are the wailings of the fallen Mevār— 'My dream is ended, the string of the lyre is torn/ In this land of the dead with a heart broken what song can I sing, my mother.'

Manasi, daughter of Amar Singha is the exponent of universal love in this drama. She has in the end stopped Amar Singh and Mahabbat Khan fighting each other by delivering a sermon on universal love. This goes against the fact of history and the spirit of the play. The defeat and fall of Mevār is too tragic for tears and this tragic solemnity is marred by the sudden intrusion of an unhistorical anti-patriotic ideology. While her own countrymen

are sacrificing their lives to fight the invaders Manasi loitering in the luxurious surrounding of the Rana is harping on the noble ideology of universal love. She has not come down to the people to serve them, she has not undergone any suffering, universal love is a luxury which has gone against the spirit of nationalism. When she and her band of singers sing, 'The country is lost, but there is no cause of sorrow for that, be men again. If the fall of country causes no sorrow to universal love, then surely this ideology is condemnable, no doubt.

Sājāhan, 1908

Perhaps the most popular play of Dwijendralal is *Sajahan*. No other play has been performed so many times as this play. Its popularity is due to the fact that there is so much variety of characters—colourful, complicated, serious, comic, entertaining and they are so well-drawn that the audience feels an irresistible attraction to them. There are several sub-plots in this play, but they are very skilfully integrated with the main plot. In fact Dwijendralal has shown mastery of craftsmanship in maintaining the basic unity of the plot while allowing the well-proportioned development of the sub-plots. In spite of the external tumultuous actions—political turmoil, secret plot, army expedition etc. the play is based essentially on the eternal family values. The tragedy of this play is the tragedy of affection, tragedy of trust. Aristotle has said, 'But when the tragic incident occur between these who are near or dear to one another—if for example a brother kills, or intends to kill, a brother, a son his father, a mother her son, a son his mother, or any other deed of the kind is done—these are the situation to be looked for by the poet? These were the situations that were looked for by the Greek dramatists and Shakespeare in *Hamlet* and *Othello*. Before stabbing himself Othello said about himself, 'Of one that lov'd not wisely but too well'. It can also be said about *Sājāhan* that he loved his sons not wisely but too well. That is why Aurangzib took advantage of that love and committed the most heinous treachery. The tragedy would have been grim if *Sajahan* died a forlorn man like King Lear. But Dwijendralal always wanted reunion, reconciliation and restoration of normal values. Hence he has shown repentant Aurangzib praying for his father's forgiveness and *Sajahan's* heart melting in affection

to forgive his son. Whether Aurangzib was really repentant or was it another act of his clever acting, it is difficult to say definitely.

The author has laid before us a tempestuous chapter of Indian history agitated by the raging storm of political intrigue, rivalry for power, fierce battles for supremacy. The old, diseased emperor Sājāhan is on the throne. Thinking of his impending death, his sons Dara, Suja, Aurangzib and Morad all aspire for the throne. Sājāhan wanted Aurangzib to succeed him, but Aurangzib was the most cunning and powerful of them and how by acts of deceit, treachery and clever manouevering he managed to crush his rival brothers and kept his father Sajahan confined in a room of Agra fort and usurped the throne is known to every reader of Indian history. Agra fort and Delhi fort are still existent monuments to that history. That history has been enacted in this drama. The drama opens with the bad news that Suja, Aurangzib and Morad all have revolted against the emperor, only Dara is by his side. Sajahan sends armies against his rebellious sons, but the irony of fate is this that he himself is held a captive in the seventh scene of the 1st act by his rebellious son Aurangzib. Thenceforth Aurangzib is the central actor of the drama. He has eliminated his brothers one by one, crushed the Rajput revolt and inside the palace neutralises any move of his adversaries under the leadership of his sister Jahanara. His past mastery in deception, treachery, clever manipulation, cold-blooded fiendish acts have made him almost an invincible superman. But even he is not without internal conflict which has made his character more human and interesting. Like Macbeth in the banquet scene Aurangzib also is horrified by the apparitions created by his excited imagination —‘What is that? Again that severed head of Dara! —the bloody body of Suja— the headless trunk of Morad! Be gone I don’t believe you. There they are coming again! They are dancing round me! Who are you?’

The play has been named after Sajahan, though after Act I, Sc vii he has no active role to play. He is prisoner confined in a room, only he has his unfailing daughter Jahanara by his side. He roars in frustrated anger like a lion, but his fruitless fulminations resound within the four walls of the room. Yet there is a majestic grandeur in his ravings, his angry outbursts, loud but futile rebukes, incoherent threats and curses fill our minds with awe and wonder.

Aurangzib's treachery and most dastardly treatment to him have shattered his heart to pieces. Once he says to Jahanara, 'I bless you so that you may not have a child.' Lear cried out in one place, 'Ingratitude thou marble hearted fiend.' Sājāhan also has raved, 'They are all offshoots of ingratitude. They are fiends.' But despite so much oppression by the treacherous son the heart of the father is ready to forgive all the offences committed by his son and welcome him back to it.

The other characters of Sājāhan are quite interesting. Dara and his wife Nadira are the two characters who have suffered most for the wrath of Aurangzib which has followed them till their sad end. Suja and his wife Piyara have provided much relief to the audience for the contrast in their characters. Suja seriously ponders over the war-strategy while Piyara laughs every serious thing away. She only sings songs as offerings of her deep love for her husband. It is a pity that such gay loving pair had such a tragic finish to their lives due to treachery and debased lust. There are two heroic women in this play, one is Jahanara and the other is Mahamaya. Jahanara is the only consolation and support of Sajahan who provides the healing touch to her father, posts him with all the information of the outside world and fights like a ferocious tigress with her rival Aurangzib. The other heroic woman is Mahamaya, wife of Yasobanta Singh, king of Jodhpur. Her band of minstrel singers sing inspiring patriotic songs to keep the fire of patriotism burning. Her husband Yasobanta Singh returns from the battle-field defeated. She orders the gates of the fort to be shut against him, as she says, 'he is not my husband, for my husband returns from the battlefield victorious, or embraces death there.'

Chandragupta, 1909

The last historical play is Chandragupta. The dramatist took materials from Greek history, the report of Megasthenes, Hindu Puranas and Mudrarakshasa. He has used the materials in the external incidents but he has given unmistakable proof of his original conception and extraordinary creative power in analysing psychological complexity and throwing new light on elemental truth. Chandragupta's devotion to his mother, the relation between Seleukos and Antigonos unknown to them but creating a lot of

complication, the romantic love of Chhaya, Helen's ideology of universal brotherhood—these are the products of the original conception of the dramatist. But his superb creation is the intensely conflicting character Chanakya who has no parallel in Bengali literature. As in other historical plays Dwijendralal has followed the course of history faithfully. The meeting of Chandragupta with Alexander is an historical incident, the rivalry between Seleukos and Antigonos is also supported by history, the marriage of Chandragupta and Helen as a term of treaty between the Greeks and the Hindus is also an historical fact. Dwijendralal was probably influenced by Mudrarakshasa in portraying the character of Chanakya whose political sagacity, shrewd diplomacy, and unscrupulous use of power helped Chandragupta to defeat Nanda and ascend the throne of Magadha.

There are two sub-plots in this play. The more important sub-plot is the Greek episode with three characters – Seleukos, Antigonos and Helen. Alexander appears only in the first scene, after that he has not come again, Seleukos is in power after the death of Alexander. He is a brave warrior, and very affectionate to his daughter Helen but does not know anything of Greek literature, history and philosophy. Antigonos is equally brave and valiant a warrior, insolent and proud but a victim to one weakness—his unrequited love for Helen. Like the Greek hero Oedipus, Antigonos does not know who is his father and ironically his most hated enemy is his father. Antigonos defeats Seleukos in a battle but in a mood of renunciation he frees Seleukos and goes away to his own land in Greece. There he learns from his mother that his sworn enemy Seleukos is none other than his father. Helen is a Greek woman with extraordinary intelligence, profound knowledge, and high idealism of universal peace and brotherhood. But whether she really loved Chandragupta is not clear from her conflicting statements. This Greek story has added variety of interest to the play, but the sub-plot is not integrated with the main plot, rather it runs parallel to the principal plot. Sisirkumar Bhaduri while producing the play on the stage omitted the Greek portion as in his opinion this portion is redundant.

There is another sub-plot where the episode of Chandraketu and his sister Chhaya have provided much interest and variety to

the play. The tribal chief Chandraketu has laid down his life fighting for his dear friend Chandragupta and Chhaya, also adept in fighting has fought valiantly keeping herself by the side of Chandragupta in the battlefield. She is also the only romantic heroine of the play dreaming and singing and dancing in joy for her love for Chandragupta, but alas all her dreams and silent devotion at the altar of love end in a sorrowful tragedy!

Chandragupta may be the hero of the play, but Chanakya is the main guiding force who has set the blazing action in full swing ruthlessly demolishing all the obstacles, destroying Nanda and his whole clan and installing at last Chandragupta on the throne. The last act of Chanakya is the defeat inflicted on the Greek army and making Chandragupta the undisputed emperor of India. Chandragupta has been all along a shadow of Chanakya, he has had to yield to Chanakya in all his decision and action. Once he tried to revolt against Chanakya and assert his opinion as the ruler, but he miserably failed in his revolt and he had to bring back Chanakya in a desperate situation.

The picture of Chanakya as he is first introduced to us is indeed horrifying. He is burning in rage, he is fuming and whetting and cursing everybody. Katyayan, another Brahmin scholar takes him to the court of Nanda with the proposal that he will act as the priest of the *Shradh* ceremony of Nanda's maternal grandfather. But Chanakya is insulted at the court by Nanda and his courtiers. In a fit of uncontrollable rage Chanakya vows to destroy Nanda and his clan. Chanakya and Chandragupta join together, Chanakya has the leading role, Chandragupta is his instrument. His political farsightedness, uncanny anticipation, unscrupulous and diabolical actions remove all obstacles and he is really established as the super-power to rule a vast expanding empire. But inside there is a weak, tender, agonised soul crying for his lost daughter. He is a terror outwardly to the people but inwardly he is an object of pity to all. Chanakya has enjoyed power to the fullest extent but his affection is unfulfilled. At last the object of his affection is restored to him and his heart is full. At last he renounces power for he has regained his normal self where love reigns supreme.

Social Plays

I

Dwijendralal has written only two social plays. His dramatic genius was on the decline when he wrote the social plays, hence his particular excellence in any aspect of the social plays is not evident. He has limited himself within the precincts of middle class family where there is little of variety and excitement, the life moving in a regulated, hackneyed way within the framework of age-old customs and traditions. Girischandra has shown this middle class Bengali life in all its aspects. Dwijendralal has also followed the same line, with only a few complex characters here and there. Dwijendralal's scepticism and non-conformist outlook are absent in these plays written in the last phase of his dramatic career. His mind was then filled with spiritual belief and deep devotion which have found expression in the social plays.

II

Parapāre (Life beyond), 1911

In this play the spiritual belief and the aspiration of the soul for the life beyond death have been shown. The eternal all-pervading Lila of the Mother Goddess—creation, preservation and destruction have been explained in this drama. When one takes shelter at her feet the difference between life and death goes away, and this life and the life beyond are bridged together. Then there is no fear of losing near and dear ones. Misery and grief all mingle with a celestial joy. The songs of Bhabaniprasad are the offerings of a devotee to the feet of the goddess Kali. On one side there is the picture of love, affection, forbearance and tenderness and on the other there are defiled pictures of various kinds of anti-social activities of the middle class society. The thrilling and melo-dramatic elements predominate in the play. The prostitute Santa has been depicted with all sympathy by the author. Her restraint and nobility of character have projected her as a spirited, undaunted woman.

Banganari (Woman of Bengal), 1916

This play was published posthumously two years after the death of Dwijendralal. He could not properly revise it before his death. The pernicious social problem— dowry system on which this play is based has been already dealt with in another famous play written by Girischandra Ghosh named 'Balidan' (Sacrifice). In fact the influence of Girischandra's social plays is too prominent in this play. The author was requested by Lalitchandra Mitra, to write a drama on improvident marriage, and to accede to that request he wrote this drama in which he has shown the baneful result of spending extravagantly in marriage. Sadananda is the mouth piece of the author, though the light hearted and eccentric Kedar is more enjoyable. Dwijendralal has all along championed the cause of revolt of woman against man-made society. In this play Sushila a highly educated independent-spirited girl hurls vitriolic attacks against the accursed enemy-man.

Miscellaneous plays

Sohrab-Rustum, 1908

With the avowed object of writing an opera of good taste Dwijendralal wrote this drama. But whether it is a pure opera is a matter of debate. The dramatist has said, in the first two acts there is the predominance of songs and in the third act there is preponderance of dialogue. According to the author the play has begun with song and dance and ended in dialogue. But it seems more importance has been given to dialogue all through. It is very difficult to call it an opera proper. The tragedy of Sohrab and Rustum as described in Sahnama has inspired the dramatist to write this play. The dialogue is partly in prose and partly in poetry.

Sinhal-Vijay (Conquest of Ceylon), 1915

The play was posthumously published after the death of the author. He died while revising the manuscript of the play. The conquest of Lanka by the brave Bengali Vijay Singh is the subject-matter of the play. But the conflict of contradictory ideas has got more preference here than the historical incidents. Unity and consistency in the plot is lacking. There is excess of emotion and melodramatic elements in the play. Excess of murder and cruelty is also very galling. The songs seem to be not suited to the situation. Except the character of Kuveni no other character of the play makes any impression.

Dwijendralal and Bengali theatre

Dwijendralal believed that drama is better appreciated if it is witnessed than read. He gave so much importance to stage and acting because he had long and intimate association with the theatre. Before sailing for England he witnessed performances of English and Bengali plays in this country and developed an attachment to stage acting and this attachment grew more after his going to England and returning from there. In England he witnessed famous actors and actresses performing on the stage. Henry Irving, Ellen Terry were then acting on the English stage. He often visited Drury Lane Theatre, the oldest and celebrated theatre of England. After returning from England he regularly went to the theatre. He first got acquainted with the Theatre, his acquaintance with the Bengali drama came later. At that time it was the golden age of acting with Girischandra, Ardhendusekhar Mustafi, Tinkari and Tarasundari— best actors and actresses on the stage. He saw the best art of acting, and from his personal experience of acting he became a learned critic on the art of acting. Not only that, he noticed minutely what sort of dialogue is appropriate to the character and situation and he used dialogue of that type in his own drama. He watched how the significance of dialogue is augmented on the stage by facial expression, gesture, posture, gait and movement. Keeping the picture of acting on the stage before him Dwijendralal would use dialogues in his drama.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that no other Bengali dramatist has achieved on the stage so much success as Dwijendralal. He has reigned supreme on the stage for more than ninety years. Once Girischandra told Dwijendralal, 'You are the greatest dramatist of future, you are the only future hope of us, is there any doubt about it?' Why his dramas are so successful on the stage can be analysed one by one. The play which can keep the audience tense with expectation and excitement is most liked by them. Dwijendralal's stage-success is due to the complex type of characters that he has created which are torn by inner

conflict and agitated by contradictions. His songs have also made his plays so popular. In some plays, songs have dominated the proceedings, the dialogue and action are insignificant there.

Dwijendralal came under the influence of Ibsen and became more conscious of the stage and stage-production. Like Ibsen he has given elaborate stage-direction at the beginning of each scene. His directions include direction to the scene designer regarding colour, form, symmetry etc, and also direction to lightman in regard to colour, brightness or otherwise of lighting, choice of spot, combination of light and shade etc. He has also taken the role of the director in issuing instructions regarding composition of the actors, their expression, gait, movement etc., even during the course of action he has given instructions regarding reaction of the character to particular words and situations, his attitude, expression, meaningful action etc. These things would not be possible, had he not intimate knowledge of stage and acting.

Dwijendralal was initially very hesitant to take part in the rehearsal of the plays. Amarendranath Datta, proprietor of the Classic theatre invited him to be present at the rehearsal of the farce *Prayaschitta*. At first he remained a bit like a fish out of water. But the actresses in order to get him more involved jokingly began to sing a song in wrong tune. Dwijendralal could not remain passive, he drew the harmonium to him and began to sing. Thus his affected aloofness was gone. He tried his best to make the acting of the actors and actresses perfect by intensive training. He gave such skilful training to Surendranath Ghosh (Dani Babu), Priyanath Ghosh, Sushilabala that they became great actors and actresses.

Dwijendralal's first play to be staged at the Star theatre was 'Biraha'. The farce was warmly greeted by the audience. The popularity of the farce was due to the comic songs already known to the public. Dwijendralal's fame was established from the successful performance of the play (Nov 4, 1899).

'Prayaschitta' was staged at the Classic theatre (1902) in the name of Bahut Accha. Amarendranath Datta, Aghornath Pathak, Kusumkumari and Pramada appeared in the roles of Champati, Umeschandra, Rebecca and Sukesini respectively. Amarendranath appeared in a musical play for the first time. The duet songs and

dances of Amarendranath and Kusumkumari were greeted with thunderous applause.

'Pashani' was not produced during the life-time of the dramatist. There was a proposal to stage it at the Star theatre, but Amritalal Basu refused to stage it because the characters of gods and goddesses are distorted in it. But Sisirkumar Bhaduri was bold enough to produce it at Natya Mandir. The drama was staged at Natya Mandir (1924), the cast was : Indra and Gautam—Sisirkumar, Rama—Rabi Ray, Satananda—Biswanath Bhaduri, Ahalya—Prabha. The music was directed by Krishnachandra De. Nripendrachandra Basu and Hemendra Kumar Ray were in charge of dance direction.

In 1923 a big exhibition was organised at Eden Gardens and Sisirkumar was invited to stage a drama there. Sisirkumar with his newly formed group staged 'Sītā'. The cast was : Rāma—Sisirkumar, Bharat—Biswanath, Lakshman—Tarakumar, Valmiki—Manoranjan Bhattacharya, Sītā—Prabha. Sisirkumar's acting was superb when the forlorn cries of Rama burst out—Sītā-Sītā-Sītā. It was as if the eternal cry of a soul in separation.

'Rana Pratap Singha' was first produced at Star and afterwards at Minerva. The drama was produced at Star (1905) with the following cast: Pratap—Amritalal Mitra, Sakta Singh—Amritalal Basu, Prithwiraj—Kashinath Chattopadhyay, Meherunnisa—Narisundari, Daulatunnisa—Basantakumari. Dwijendralal was displeased with the authorities of Star theatre for including a poem of Girischandra in the play without his knowledge and withdrew his drama from that theatre and gave it to the authorities of Minerva theatre for performance. The performance continued at the Minerva theatre from the next week. The artists who acted at Minerva theatre were : Pratapsingha—Surendranath Ghosh (Dani Babu), Sakta Singh—Apares Mukhopadhyay, Prithwiraj—Ardhendusekhar Mustafi, Joshibai—Tarasundari, Mehar—Sushilabala. The play here was not as successful as expected. Amritalal Mitra and Amritalal Basu's acting at the Star theatre was better.

'Durgadas' was staged at Minerva (1906). Dwijendralal was present at the theatre on the second night. He was greeted with loud cheers by the audiences. Those who acted in the play were:

Durgadas—Dani Babu, Aurangzib—Priyanath Ghosh, Dilir Khan—Taraknath Palit, Razia—Sushilabala.

'Sohrab-Rustum' was produced at Minerva (1908) with the following cast: Sohrab—Surendranath Ghosh (Dani Babu), Rustum—Taraknath Palit, Tamina—Sushilabala. Before the start of the play a condolence meeting was held at the Minerva stage to pay respects to the memory of Ardhendusekhar Mustafi, the greatest comic actor of the Bengali stage. Amritalal Basu, Dwijendralal Roy and Amarendranath Datta paid respectful tributes to the memory of Ardhendusekhar. Taraknath Palit in the role of Rustum gave a sterling performance.

'Nurjahan' was produced at Minerva (1908) and those who participated were: Jahangir—Priyanath Ghosh, Nurjahan—Prakasmani. The gate receipts of that first night were only rupees two hundred fifty only. It is strange that this play, undoubtedly one of the best of Dwijendralal received such poor response from the audience. Maybe the audience at that time was not enthusiastic for such psychological tragedy, at that time the popular demand was for highly emotional patriotic plays.

'Mevār-Patan' was staged at Minerva (1908) with the following cast: Amar Singh—Dani Babu, Mahabbat Khan—Priyanath Ghosh, Govinda Singh—Taraknath Palit, Manasi—Sushilabala, Satyavati—Prakasmani, Kalyani—Hemantakumari. It was not possible for me to witness this performance, but after many years I had the good fortune to witness the performance of this play at Rangmahal theatre. Ahindra Chowdhuri's impassioned acting in the role of Govinda Singh was so inspiring, so heroic and so tragic that the memory thrills and inspires my mind.

The most acted play of Dwijendralal is 'Sājāhan' which was first produced at Minerva with the following cast : Sajahan—Priyanath Ghosh, Aurangzib—Dani Babu, Dara—Taraknath Palit, Dildar—Haribhushan Bhattacharya, Jahanara—Sudhirabala, Piyara—Sushilabala, Nadira—Hemantakumari, Mahamaya—Prakasmani. On the second night the words appeared in advertisement—'Grand success—Unqualified success—Unique success.' Such language indicates that the play was an instant success. The acting of Dani Babu and Priyanath Ghosh in the roles of Aurangzib and 'Sājāhan' were of the highest class. After

a long time when 'Sājāhan' was staged at Star theatre (1924), Ahindra Chowdhuri appeared in the role of 'Sājāhan' with phenomenal success also. Many actors have appeared in the role of 'Sājāhan' but nobody has achieved so much success as Ahindra Chowdhuri. Shattered by the ingratitude of the son the futile fumings of the father in vain, the frustrated sky-rending cries of wounded soul were enacted so vividly by Ahindra Chowdhuri that the audience was overpowered with intense feeling. The cast at the Star theatre was as follows: Sajahan-Ahindra Chowdhuri, Aurangzib-Dani Babu, Dara-Tinkari Chakravarti, Dildar-Nirmalendu Lahiri, Jahanara-Kusumkumari, Piyara-Ascharyamayi Dasi, Mahamaya-Nibhanani. Tarasundari occasionally appeared in the role of Jahanara at Minerva theatre.

Another drama of Dwijendralal which was also very popular at the stage was 'Chandragupta'. 'Chandragupta' was staged at Minerva theatre with the following actors and actresses : Chandragupa-Priyanath Ghosh, Chanakya-Dani Babu, Seleukos-Haribhushan, Antigonos-Satyen De, Mura-Hemantakumari, Chaya-Narisundari, Helen-Sarojini. Though the play is named Chandragupta, the pivotal character of the play is Chanakya and every great character has been tested by his acting in this role. In the opinion of many Dani Babu's acting in the role of Chanakya is his best. Uncontrollable anger, hatred for one and all, burning like widespread fire to destroy everything—these things were manifest in his acting. Sisirkumar Bhaduri appeared in the role of Chanakya in 1911 at the University Institute, Naresh Mitra appearing in the role of Katyayan. Sisirkumar used to say that he got famous by acting in this role. Afterwards in 1922 he acted in the role of Chanakya at Madan theatre. The last time he acted in this role was in 1956. Sisirkumar acted in many complex and difficult roles, but he was at his best in this role. While Dani Babu's Chanakya had an exuberance of emotion and overdose of pathos, Sisirkumar's Chanakya had emotion mixed with intellect. Dani Babu would talk to an unseen force above and Sisirkumar would tap his head and talk to an evil guiding force within. His fiery harangue to remove inertia of Chandragupta, his high leap above the ground in Satanic glee after the murder of Nanda and his highly tense mental condition

agonised by conflicting emotion at the time of re-union with his daughter are unforgettable experience for any spectator.

'Chandragupta' was staged by Art Theatre (1924) with Dani Babu, Durgadas Bandyopadhyay, Ahindra Chowdhury, Nares Mitra and Indu Mukhopadhyay in the roles of Chanakya, Chandragupta, Seleukos, Katyayan and Antigonos. Afterwards Radhikananda Mukhopadhyay appeared in the role of Antigonos. Nares Mitra acted in the serio-comic role of Katyayan splendidly well. Ahindra Chowdhuri's acting in the role of Seleukos was quite interesting.

'Parapare' was staged at Star theatre (1912) with the following cast: Bisweswar-Amarendranath Datta, Bhabaniprasad-Kashinath Chattopadhyay, Mahim-Kunj Lal Chakravarti, Saraju-Basantakumari, Santa-Sushilabala, Hiranmayi-Narisundari. Young in age Amarendranath did the part of an old man quite creditably well. His jokes and lamentations were appreciated equally. Both Sushilabala and Narisundari acted their parts well. In later years Ahindra Chowdhuri appeared in the role of Bisweswar and as in other roles of old men his acting in this role was superb, bringing alternately laughter and tears in his audience. Sinhal Vijay was performed at Minerva, in which Apares Mukhopadhyay acted in the role of Sinhabahu with success.

Most of Dwijendralal's plays were staged for the first time between 1897 and 1912, i.e. within the last fifteen years of his life. At that time it was the glorious period of Girischandra-Ardhendusekhar and their associates reigning supreme on the Bengali stage. But Girischandra did not appear in any role of Dwijendralal's play. Ardhendusekhar appeared in the role of Prithwiraj (Rana Pratap Singh), but it was not one of his best performances, there was an excess of light humour in his acting which was not liked by the audience. His plays were staged at Minerva and Star, mainly at Minerva. Dani Babu, Priyanath Ghosh and Taraknath Palit were the three principal actors at Minerva. Girischandra did not appear in many roles in the last phase of his illustrious career, rather he was withdrawing himself from acting and was trying to help his son Dani Babu to build up his career by giving him more opportunity to appear in the main roles. The main roles of Dwijendralal's plays were distributed to

him, e.g. Rana Pratap, Amar Singh, Aurangzib, Chanakya etc. Of these roles Chanakya and Aurangzib are the most important roles in which he has excelled more than any other actor. In the opinion of many he was the greatest actor in this role. Priyanath Ghosh was another renowned actor at Minerva theatre and he acted in equally important roles. His best acted role was Sājāhan. His worthy successor was Ahindra Chowdhury in that role. Those who saw both the artists acting in the same role say that the broken character of Sājāhan—weak, helpless and pathetic was manifest in Priyanath Ghosh's acting, but there was no trace of the majestic personality of Sājāhan even in bondage. It was left to Ahindra Chowdhuri to show two opposite personalities of Sājāhan—one was old, infirm, decrepit Sājāhan willing in vain and the other was a mighty power confined in a cell roaring like a caged lion. Another powerful actor was Taraknath Palit who excelled in character-acting. Among the actresses Sushilabala was most important who appeared in the musical roles. She was not beautiful, but she had a golden voice. She was called by her fans as 'the divine Sushila.' Her songs in the roles of Khadija, Piyara and Manasi enthralled the audience and kept them spell-bound. When the new age was ushered in by Sisirkumar Bhaduri and his group and the Art Theatre after 1920, Dwijendralal's plays were still popular as before, particularly the plays 'Sājāhan', 'Mevar-Patan' and 'Chandragupta'. 'Punarjanma' and 'Parapare' were occasionally staged. Sītā and Pashani were produced by Sisirkumar Bhaduri. Dani Babu still continued in this period. Sisirkumar created a sensation by acting in the role of Rāma in the play 'Sītā' by Joges Chowdhuri based on Dwijendralal's 'Sītā'. His production of Pāshāpi was not successful, but his acting in the role of Chanakya stood above all. Sisirkumar also appeared in the role of Sājāhan and gave an interpretation of the character all his own. He also acted in the double roles of Sājāhan and Aurangzib. This was possible only for the incredible genius of Sisir Bhaduri. Nares Mitra also acted in the role of Sājāhan. But his acting in the role of Kātyāyan has not been equalled by any other character. His broken and comic voice raised laughter and he assumed a serious look always to produce more laughter. I have seen both Nirmalendu Lahiri and Durgadas Bandyopadhyay

in the role of Aurangazib, Nirmalendu's voice was musical and with rise and fall like waves it captivated the audience. But Durgadas Bandyopadhyay's voice was clear, distinct and without any melodramatic tone. Words came out from his mouth as natural flow of water. He had the appearance of Apollo, and every one was charmed by his magnetic speech, gait and movement. Durgadas was the most favourite hero of the stage. His acting in the role of Chandragupta was appreciated by one and all. Nirmalendu Lahiri, Jahar Gangopadhyay and Chhabi Biswas all appeared in the role of Dildar, the comlex comic character of Sājāhan and all did will in his own way. Antigonos is a colourful character and Radhikananda was a past master in acting in foreigner's role and his mantle fell upon Bhumen Ray who was equally smart in such role. Sushilabala's place was taken in many plays by Ascharyamoyee Dasi who was a renowned songstress of that time. Saraju Devi in spite of her short stature could act in the heroic roles quite creditably. Her acting in the role of Jahanara was widely appreciated by the audience.

Miscellaneous writings

Bilater Patra (Letters from England). 1884-85

As already stated these letters were written for the weekly Patākā. The first part of the letters is a description of the sea-voyage from start to his arrival at London. Dwijendralal's poetic love for nature, his description of the majestic beauty of the sea in the background of limitlessness of the sky at times covered with dense clouds and at other times brightly shining in moonlight captures the imagination of the reader. Short accounts of the ports where the ship anchored for sometime are quite informative. Lanka, Piram, Ports aid, Gibraltar, are some ports which have been included in his writing. While going through the Mediterranean sea the author remembers the glories of ancient Greece and Rome. The first sight of London filled his mind with indescribable joy, he was simply charmed by its beauty, he felt the dream of his life time fulfilled.

The author has also given a very intimate account of the life on board. He liked many things of the Europeans but he never bowed down to them in any matter. He never compromised with national honour and prestige and retorted sharply to any slighting remark by any European.

The author has given short accounts of social, political and family life of the English society. The personal habits, customs, the conveyance system and the characteristics of English weather and climate have been narrated. The humorous pen of the writer is evident everywhere. He does not believe in the motto—plain living and high thinking. He advocates for minimum comfort and limited luxury and so in his opinion discontent leads to prosperity in life. His Stratford-on-Evon is quite interesting. In his letter dated June 24, 1885 he addresses a few words to the bard of Stratford on-Evon 'Sleep, O bard. Your name will not be unheard where English language is known. ... The black son from far off Aryavartta living on the bank of the Ganges will offer to you warm embrace and respects as the brother of

the gifted Indian poet Kalidasa and the favourite poet of the world.'

In the Letters from England the Bengali prose style of the poet is very easy and intimate. He has a keen observation of the land and people as expressed in the letters. We get an idea of England one hundred years ago. He has praised the English way of life in many respects, but his patriotism and devotion to his own country, his strong self-respect and sense of national honour are manifest everywhere. His poetic temperament and the picture of nature occupy much space in his letters.

Kalidas O Bhababhuti

It is a long critical essay on Kalidas and Bhababhuti, the two greatest dramatists of Sanskrit literature. Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath and a host of others have written critical essays on Kalidas and Bhababhuti, but none of them has written so elaborately on the two dramatists. Kalidas and Bhababhuti have been compared with each other by many critics. Iswarchandra Vidyasagar said that Sakuntala is the greatest drama written in Sanskrit literature. In his opinion Bhababhuti's place is next to Kalidas only. But Dr. Keith in his Sanskrit Drama says that Bababhuti excels Kalidas in some respects. He says, '... what is awe-inspiring and magnificent in its grandeur has an attraction for Bhababhuti which is not shown in the more limited love of nature in Kalidasa. He excels Kalidasa also in the last act, for the re-union of Sita and Rama has a depth of sentiment not evoked by the tamer picture of the meeting of Dushmanta and Sakuntala, both Rama and Sita are creatures of more vital life and deeper experience than the king and his woodland love.'

The author has given in the beginning gists of the two plays—Śakuntalā and Uttara Rāma Charita. He has shown the points of similarity and dissimilarity between the two stories. While analysing and comparing the characters he has extolled the character of Sitā. Dwijendralal had all along deep respect for the character of Sita which prompted him to write the poetic drama on Sitā. But his remarks about Bhababhuti are uncharitable and unjustified. His Rāma is only like a henpecked Bengali and his

Sītā is merely a devoted Bengali wife. Dwijendralal was undoubtedly influenced by unjustifiably severe remarks of Bankimchandra. I do feel strongly that there is no character in Sanskrit more tragic than that of Rāma. When Rāma laments on the eve of Sītā's exile, 'Śūnyamadhuna Jīrṇāraṇyṃ Jagat Asārah Sansārah. Kaṣṭapṛāyam Śariram. Aśaranosmi. Kim Karomi, Ka Gatiḥ (The world is desolate to me. It is all without any substance. The body is only struck with pain. I have no shelter, what shall I do? What course shall I follow?) Is there more tragic expression anywhere else? It will not be out of place here to quote the remarks of Dr. Keith, 'Sītā and Rāma are splendidly characterised, the one in his greatness of power and nobility in spirit, the other ethereal and spiritual removed from gross things of earth.'

After analysing the characters the author has discussed the dramatic qualities of the two dramas. This portion is very important for the evaluation of any drama. Here also the author has not done justice to the character of Rama. He has not noticed the excruciating internal conflict in Rama's character. After discussing the dramatic qualities the author has assessed the poetic qualities of the two dramas. Last of all the author has discussed the language and nature of the two dramas.

There is a miscellaneous chapter in the end. In that chapter he has dwelt on many relevant things. In his opinion Uttar Rāma Charita is no drama, but it is excellent as a poem. Sakuntala is perfect as a drama, but according to the critic Bhababhuti as a poet is far superior to Kalidasa. These are extreme views which are open to question. The author has made another hasty remark. He has said that woman is an object of enjoyment in Kalidasa and she is an object of worship in Bhababhuti. This is also a highly controversial statement.

Chinta O Kalpana (Reflection and Imagination)

This is a collection of some reflective and imaginative essays published in different papers and journals.

'Prem ki unmattata', 1883 (Is love a madness)– Love is not inimical to duty. Indeed love is a heavenly thing, it leads to universal love and love of God.

'Nutan O Puratan', 1895 (Old and new) – The old order

changeth yielding place to new. The Hindus once rose to the pinnacle of glory now have fallen from glory. New order is sometimes worse than the old one, yet the new order is to be accepted.

‘Ingreji O Bangla Poshak’, 1895 (English and Bengali dress) *Dhuti* and *Chadar* is the best dress for a Bengali. The English dress is unsuitable for a Bengali.

‘Ingreji O Hindu Sangit’, 1906 (English and Hindu songs)

There is fundamental difference between English and Hindu songs. The notes of English songs are independent of one another, but those of Hindu songs are mixed with one another. There is some restraint in English songs, but the Hindu songs are marked by excess of emotion.

Jatibhed, 1907 (Caste-distinction)

There are arguments for and against caste-distinction. Those who are in favour of abolishing it argue, nobody can claim superiority simply because of his caste, it is not conducive to the welfare of the society, it curbs the right of the individuals to select their own jobs. Those who are in favour of retaining it argue that man acquires as natural efficiency in hereditary work, there is less chance of social discontent, this distinction is inevitable to destroy this time-honoured system is a vandalism.

Nānbhikshā, 1898 (Begging honour)

We are pleased when anyone praises us but we are displeased when we are criticised for any short coming. We are living in bondage, there is no peace at home and we are begging for some favour from them, but they do not care a straw for us.

Upama, 1907 (Simile)

Simile is a means to communicate an idea. It also adds beauty to poetry. There is another word metaphor, but the excess of its use is not good. But poetry appeals for its intrinsic beauty and not for any ornament.

Banglar Rangabhumī, 1895 (Theatre of Bengal)

The tradition of the theatrical art has been continuing in India

from earliest time. It is very improper that some people are leading a crusade against it. After all there cannot be any drama without female character. It is also preposterous to think that boys will appear in the female roles. The argument that the theatre is increasing the number of prostitutes also does not cut any ice. It is also not true that patronising the theatre leads to moral degradation.

Gora, 1910

The author analyses the characters of the novel, he shows how shallow is Gora's orthodoxy in regard to Hindu religion. In his opinion the novel is of extraordinary merit.

Nabin Chandra, 1908

In a condolence held after the death of Nabinchandra the author pays high tributes to the poetic genius of Nabinchandra Sen. Once Nabinchandra was a popular poet. Afterwards he began to be criticised for his portrayal of the character of Sirajddaula in Palasir Yuddha. But the author has justified Nabinchandra's views.

Khukumanir Chhara, 1899 (Rhymes of a girl)

The book of rhymes for children collected by Jogindranath Sarkar has been reviewed by the author. The rhymes lull the children to sleep and open their windows for their land of dreams.

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Appendix – I

Important events of Dwijendralal's life

1863	Born at Krishnagar, Nadia
1878	Passed Entrance Examination from Krishnagar Collegiate School
1882	Aryagatha, Part I published
1884	Passed M.A. Examination in English, stood second
1884	Obtained State Scholarship to go to England for studies in Agriculture
1884-85	Wrote 'Bilater Patra' (Letters from England)
1886	Appointed Deputy Magistrate and Collector
1887	Married Surabala Devi, daughter of Pratap Chandra Majumder
1888	Appointed Assistant Settlement Officer of Srinagar and Banol State
1894	'Aryagatha', part II published
1895	'Kalki-Avatar' published
1897	'Biraha' published
1898	'Ashade' published
1900	'Tryahasparsha' published/'Pashani' published
1901	'Prayaschitta' published
1902	'Mandra' and 'Sita' published
1903	'Tarabai' published
1903	Wife Surabala Devi died
1905	'Purnima-Milan' formed
1905	'Pratap Singha' published/staged at Star and at Minerva from the next Saturday
1906	'Durgadas' published and staged at Minerva
1906	'Nurjahan' published and staged at Minerva
1908	'Sohrab and Rustum' published and staged at Minerva
1908	'Mevar-Patan' published and staged at Minerva
1908	'Sajahan' published and staged at Minerva
1909	'Chandragupta' published and staged at Minerva
1911	'Parapare' published and staged at Star

- 1912 'Ananda-Bidaya' published and staged at Star for one night
- 1913 'Bhishma' published
- 1913 Retired from service
- 1913 Appointed Editor, 'Bharatvarsha'
- 1913 Revising the manuscript of 'Sinhala-Vijay' at the last moments
- 1913 (May 17) – Passed away
- 1915 'Sinhala-Vijay' published
- 1916 'Banganari' published and staged at Minerva

Appendix II

Important contemporaty events during Dwijendralal's lifetime

1867	Hindu Mela first held
1872	National Theatre – first public theatre established
1873	Dinabandhu Mitra died
1873	Bengal Theatre – first permanently constructed public theatre
1876	Saratchandra Chattopadhyay born
1883	Star Theatre established
1893	Minerva Theatre established
1893	Bangiya Sāhitya Pariṣad founded
1894	Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay died
1905	Partition of Bengal announced
1905	Boycott movement started by Surendranath Bandyopadhyay, Krishnakumar Mitra and others. This movement was converted to freedom movement under the leadership of Aurobinda Ghosh, Bipinchandra Pal and others.
1905	'Sirajddaula' of Girischandra staged at Minerva
1908	Ardhendusekhar Mustafi died
1908	Amritalal Mitra died
1912	Girischandra Ghosh died
1913	Rabindranath Tagore awarded Nobel Prize

Appendix III

Acting in Dwijendralal's plays

Ardhendusekhar Mustafi

Prithwiraj (Rana Pratap Singh)	Minerva	1905
Rajsingh (Durgadas)	Minerva	1907

Surendranath Ghosh (Dani Babu)

Rana Pratap Singha (Pratap Singha)	Minerva	1905
Amar Singha (Mevar Patan)	Minerva	1908
Aurangzib (Sajahan)	Minerva	1908
Chanakya (Chandragupta)	Minerva	1911
Chanakya (Chandragupta)	Star	1923
Aurangzib (Sajahan)	Star	1924

Priyanath Ghosh

Aurangzib (Durgadas)	Minerva	1906
Mahabbat Khan (Mevar Patan)	Minerva	1908
Jahangir (Nurjahan)	Minerva	1908
Sajahan (Sajahan)	Minerva	1909
Chandragupta (Chandragupta)	Minerva	1911

Taraknath Palit

Dilir Khan (Durgadas)	Minerva	1906
Rustum (Sohrab and Rustum)	Minerva	1908
Govinda Singha (Mevar-Patan)	Minerva	1908
Dara (Sajahan)	Minerva	1909

Tinkari Dasi

Mahamaya (Durgadas)	Minerva	1907
Jahanara (Sajahan)	Monomohan	1915

Tarasundari

Tarabai (Tarabai)	Unique	1903
Josibai and Daulatunnisa (Rana Pratap Singha)	Minerva	1905

Jahanara (Sajahan)	Minerva	1909
Helen (Chandragupta)	Minerva	1911
Kuveni (Sinhala Vijay)	Minerva	1915
Benodini (Banga nari)	Minerva	1916

Sushilabala

Meherunnisa (Rana Pratap Singh)	Minerva	1905
Razia (Rana Pratap Singh)	Minerva	1906
Manasi (Mevar-Patan)	Minerva	1908
Piyara (Sajahan)	Minerva	1909
Santa (Parapare)	Star	1912

Amarendranath Datta

Champati (Prayaschitta)	Classic	1902
Durgadas (Durgadas)	Minerva	1907
Bisweswar (Parapare)	Star	1912

Sisir Kumar Bhaduri

Chanakya (Chandragupta)	Madan	1922
Indra O Gautam (Pashani)	Manomohan	1924
	Natyamandir	
Sajahan and Aurangzib (Sajahan)	Natyamandir	1927

Ahindra Chaudhuri

Seleukos (Sajahan)	Star	1923
Sajahan (Sajahan)	Star	1924
Govinda Singha (Mevar Patan)	Rangmahal	1945

Durgadas Bandyopadhyay

Chandragupta (Chandragupta)	Star	1923
Amar Singha (Mevar-Patan)	Star	1925

Naresh Mitra

Chanakya (Chandragupta)	Minerva	1922
Sajahan (Sajahan)	Minerva	1922
Katyan (Chandragupta)	Srar	1923
Jadav (Punarjanma)	Natyamandir	1925

Nirmalendu Lahiri

Dildar (Sajahan)	Star	1924
Chanakya (Chandragupta)	Manomohan	1928
Aurangzib (Sajahan)	Natya Bharati	1941
Sagar Singh (Mevar-Patan)	Rangmahal	1945

Other artistes appearing in some important roles

Tinkari Chakravarti -- Chanakya (Star-1923), Dara (Star-1924),
 Govinda Singha- (Star-1925)
 Radhikananda Mukhopadhyay-Antigonos (Menerva-1922),
 Aurangzib (Minerva 1922)
 Bhumen Ray - Antigonos (Natyamandir - 1927)
 Chhabbi Biswas - Aurangzib (Sri Rangam-1951)
 Krishnabhamini - Chhaya (Star - 1923)
 Niharbala - Helen (Star-1923)
 Prabha Devi - Mura (Nava Natyamandir-1937)
 Saraju Devi - Jahanara (Natya Bharati-1941)

